

Beirut appeals for help to end occupation

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanese President Elias Hrawi appealed on Monday for help from the world community to end Israel's occupation of South Lebanon. "We're done with establishing internal peace. What remains is for the world to help us regain our occupied land up to the internationally-recognised border to consolidate our sovereignty," Mr. Hrawi told foreign diplomats in Beirut. Mr. Hrawi called for the implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 425 of 1978 stipulating an immediate Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon on the basis of which Lebanon joined the Arab-Israeli peace process. But three years of U.S.-brokered peace talks between Lebanon and Israel have produced no tangible results yet. Mr. Hrawi said a just and comprehensive peace would come about if peace is achieved between Israel and both Lebanon and Syria.

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New cabinet assured of vote of confidence but not sweeping majority

By Ayman Al Safadi
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The government of Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker will in a few days seek a vote of confidence from the Lower House of Parliament, and early expectations are that it will comfortably win that vote.

According to the predictions, the new cabinet is certain to win more votes than the 47 that Sharif Zeid's second cabinet won in 1991, but it will fall short of matching the 68 votes that Mudar Badran's 1989 cabinet won as the first post-elections government.

In all cases, the new government is expected to win more votes than the 48 that Taher Al Masri's cabinet won in 1991 and the 41 votes that the previous government of Abdul Salam Majali received in 1993.

Mr. Badran's agreement with the then 23-strong Muslim Brotherhood bloc in the House was an instrumental factor in enabling his government to obtain the big vote as his policy programme sought to meet 14 demands made by the Islamists, who later joined formally in coalition with him.

The Islamists will be the major factor in preventing the new government from getting a similar number of confidence votes.

Though Sharif Zeid formed his government,

which includes 17 deputies, after consultations with the major bloc in the House, including representatives of the Islamists, the spokesman of the 17-strong Islamic Action Front (IAF) bloc, Hamza Mansour, charged that their parliamentary group. He said Sharif Zeid did not consult the IAF on the formation of the government.

"We will have to examine the ministerial team and study the prime minister's neglect of the largest parliamentary bloc in the country," Mr. Mansour said.

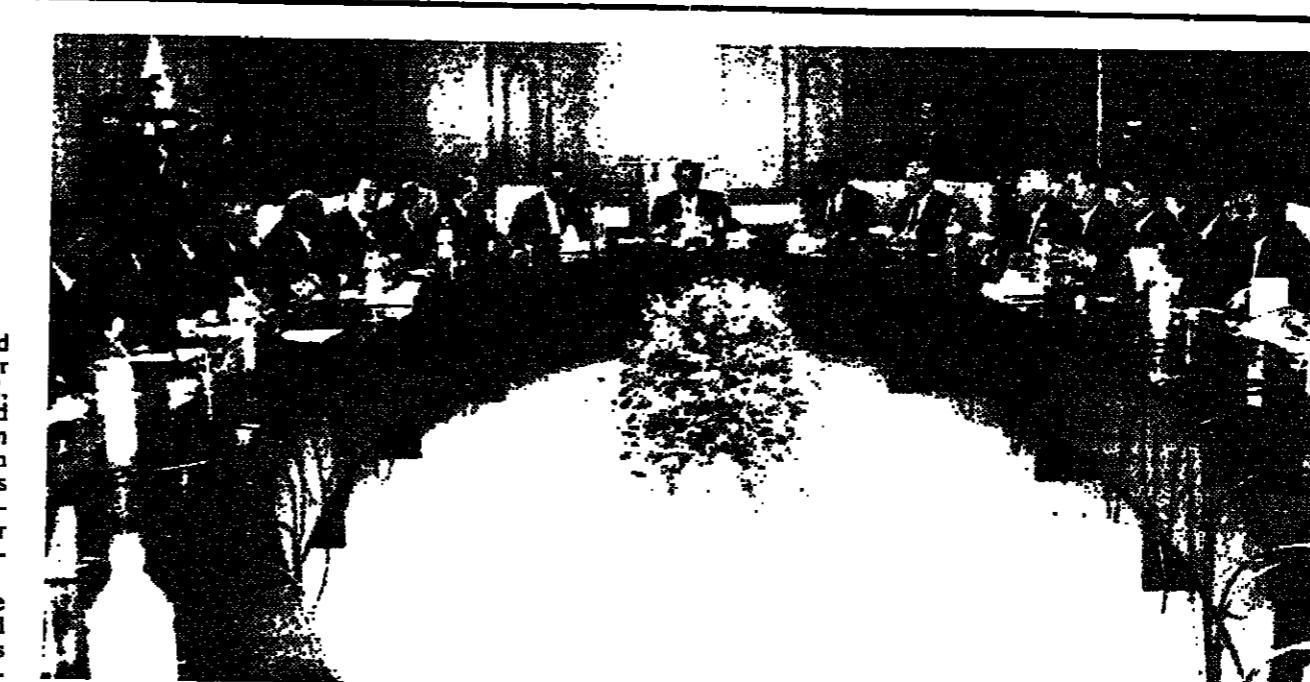
He also said the new government's policy on the peace process will determine their assessment of it, adding that "we will not deviate from our declared principles" on what he called "the surrender treaty" when a vote of confidence is cast on the cabinet.

The IAF earlier said it would oppose any government that would move towards peace with Israel.

Also unhappy with the government are leftist deputies who believe the cabinet is unrepresentative of all political trends in the country.

"The government is a one-colour government and will not be able to face the challenges or implement the great responsibilities outlined in (His Majesty King Hussein's) letter of designation. That is what its composition indicates," said Deputy Bassam.

(Continued on page 7)



The Cabinet of Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker holds its first session on Monday (photo by Yousef Allan)

Sharif Zeid urges cabinet to work in harmony, with total commitment

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker Monday convened the first meeting of his cabinet sworn in on Sunday and voiced the government's deep pride in the confidence invested in its members and the mission entrusted to them by His Majesty King Hussein.

Stressing that the government would consider the King's letter of designation to the government as a guideline, Sharif Zeid said his government would enhance the concept of institutions and the rule of law and would complete comprehensive reforms on sound and scientific

basis in accordance with clearly defined plans.

Sharif Zeid stressed that all possible efforts would be exerted towards alleviating the suffering of people, especially unemployment and poverty.

Calling on cabinet members to work with a spirit of teamwork, Sharif Zeid said he wanted to see harmony, with each ministry seeking the highest degrees of integrity, justice and equality.

He emphasised the government's keenness to strengthen the climate of freedom and democracy with full commitment to the Constitution, the National Charter and the rule of law.

The prime minister and cabinet members Monday received well-wishers who visited the Prime Ministry to offer congratulations.

The callers included former prime ministers, speakers of Parliament and senior government officials in addition to heads of diplomatic missions, professional organisations, universities, tribal chiefs and representatives of Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan.

Sharif Zeid also received a cable of congratulations from Sheikh Khalid Ben Salman Al Khalid, prime minister of Bahrain.

Papandreu ends visit, says talks successful

AMMAN (Petra) — Greek Prime Minister Andreas Papandreu ended four-day visit to Jordan on Monday and described his talks with His Majesty King Hussein and government leaders here as successful.

Speaking to Petra shortly before his departure with his delegation, the Greek premier said the Middle East peace process was following a firm course and expressed hope that a comprehensive and just peace settlement would be reached in the region.

Mr. Papandreu said that his visit had opened a new chapter in Jordanian-Greek ties and paved the way for enhanced cooperation in tourism and culture.

A Greek cultural centre will soon open in Amman marking the start of a long process of close cooperation between the two countries, especially in the peace era, he said.

The Greek premier voiced appreciation of the hospitality accorded to him and his delegation by King Hussein and the Jordanian government.

Mr. Papandreu was seen off with an official farewell ceremony attended by Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, former Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, cabinet members and senior officials.

Ali Khamenei said Monday, Israel will never use its nuclear arsenal because the Jewish state would potentially expose itself to any fallout.

"The atomic bomb is not a weapon which can be used by the Zionist state," Ayatollah Khamenei said, quoted by the state television.

"No matter where it decides to use them, Israelis themselves will be exposed to its impact and radiation if used in the Middle East."

Israel has never confirmed or denied Western estimates that it possesses about 100 nuclear warheads, sticking to the line adopted in 1965 that it would not be the first country to introduce nuclear weapons to the region.

Ayatollah Khamenei said Israel lacked any "real power" to fight a war and criticised Arab countries for not being able to remove the "cancerous tumor" in the region "despite having the weapons and the manpower."

Arab states failed to defeat Israel because they "lack faith and a sense of responsibility," he said.

Israel has charged that Iran could have a nuclear capability within the next few years and has allegedly warned it may strike Iranian nuclear reactors if Tehran continues its nuclear programme.

Israeli jets bombed an Iraqi nuclear reactor in 1981.

But the Iranian foreign ministry countered that Israel

(Continued on page 7)

Iranian leader Ayatollah



An Israeli guard turns back a Palestinian youth coming to demonstrate in Al Khader against the widening of the Jewish settlement of Efrat (AFP photo)

Russians, Chechens fight pitched battles for Grozny

GROZNY (Agencies) — Russian infantry and Chechen rebels were locked in pitched street battles here Sunday after the Russians poured in thousands of infantrymen in a massive assault on the presidential palace.

"The Russians have the train station and the central market but we still hold the presidential palace. Sometimes it's burning but we are still inside," said Hamza Bedoyev, a 40-year-old Chechen fighter, after a night of intense clashes.

Before darkness brought fresh fighting, another Chechen in the palace said: "We'll all keep on fighting to the end. If we lose the war in the city, we'll fight in the mountains. If we lose there, we'll fight in Moscow."

The Russian attack was spearheaded by paratroopers, special forces and marines—a change of tactics from the disastrous tank assault which failed at the cost of heavy casualties over the New Year weekend.

Chechen fighters said the Russian attack was strongest 700 metres west of the palace, core of the Chechen resistance since Russian forces entered the tiny republic to crush its three-year rebellion from Moscow.

But street battles were also raging to the north and east of the palace.

A Western cameraman who spent part of Sunday

night in the heavily damaged palace said Russian tanks were becoming increasingly accurate in their shelling of President Boris Yeltsin's grip on power.

Officials in Ingushetia, Chechenya's neighbour to the west, said they had seen at least 75 heavy tanks passing through on their way to the rebel region early on Monday morning.

A correspondent for Interfax news agency in Grozny said Russian forces now controlled two-thirds of the city.

The multi-storey palace, headquarters of separatist leader Dzhokhar Dudayev and a sanctuary for some of the civilians fleeing the fighting, has become the symbol of Chechenya's revolt against Russian rule.

There was no firm word on Mr. Dudayev's whereabouts. Russian government statements say the 50-year-old former Soviet air force general left Grozny last Friday for southern Chechenya. But this has not been confirmed by the Chechens.

Chechen official Hamata

(Continued on page 7)

Arafat, Peres vow to extend self-rule

EREZ CROSSING (Agencies) — Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres vowed to overcome all the hurdles blocking the extension of Palestinian self-rule after talks here Monday.

In Cairo, Israeli and Palestinian officials resumed negotiations on elections to an autonomy council and the powers and make-up of the

body.

Mr. Peres also planned two days of talks in Paris beginning Tuesday as part of a drive to spark new life into the stalled Middle East peace process, France said.

Mr. Peres is to meet President Francois Mitterrand, Prime Minister Edouard Balladur and Foreign Minister Alain Juppe in Paris before flying on to Latin America, the French foreign ministry said.

Their talks will focus on economic ties between Israel and Europe as well as on the peace deal, which has foundered over the next stages of the Israel-Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) accord reached in late 1993.

Mr. Arafat and Mr. Peres, who last met on Dec. 21, both emerged in a positive mood from two hours of talks at the Erez crossing into the Gaza Strip.

"We ... have to overcome a lot of difficulties but we think we'll get an agreement on the second phase (of autonomy)," Mr. Peres told a press conference. "While we are analysing difficulties, we are also seeing solutions."

"In spite of all the worries and scepticism, the Oslo agreement is being implemented, although we are late in some ways."

"We are determined to help the Palestinian Authority to fulfil autonomy and resolve the security problems," Mr. Peres said.

The two men announced agreement on "safe passages," which will enable Palestinians to travel from the Gaza Strip to the self-rule enclave of Jericho via Israel.

"We have agreed to safe passages on both ways between Jericho and Gaza," Mr. Peres said.

The Israeli delegation gave

However, only women older than 35 and men older than 50 will be able to travel without hindrance unless they are members of the Palestinian Authority, the minister explained.

Mr. Arafat called the meeting "important and fruitful."

"There was an atmosphere of understanding. We are determined to understand more and more the security problems of Israel and to see what we can do to overcome difficulties."

Mr. Arafat said the fate of Palestinian prisoners was also raised, especially women.

Mr. Peres noted that Israel had set up a ministerial committee to handle the prisoner issue. "We'll do our utmost to facilitate a solution," he said.

Meanwhile in Cairo, Saeb Erekat, head of the Palestinian delegation to the talks on elections, said the PLO wanted the future president of the self-rule council to be elected by direct suffrage.

"I went up to the Golan today to get a first-hand picture of the strategic situation. Anyone who goes there can tell how strategic it is," Mr. Peres told reporters after viewing the heights from a helicopter and an observation point in Israel.

But he said discussions were continuing "on all aspects of the election, including the nature and nature of the council."

The Cairo talks were to focus only on election procedures, avoiding sensitive security issues such as an Israeli troop redeployment, which has threatened to scupper the talks several times.

PLO and Israeli sources said.

The redeployment, which was to precede elections, will be left to higher levels to resolve, they added.

The Palestinian negotiators are led by Dr. Erekat and the Israelis by Brigadier-General Gadi Zohar, head of the "civilian administration" in the West Bank.

A dispute over the venue of the talks held up the start of the negotiations by two hours with both sides insisting their hotel should be the Golan.

The Israeli delegation gave

(Continued on page 7)

Swearing-in

NEWLY-appointed Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Sami Darwazeh Monday takes the oath of office before His Majesty King Hussein in a ceremony held at the Royal Court.

Mr. Darwazeh was abroad when the newly-appointed government of Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker was sworn in Sunday.

The ceremony Monday was attended by Sharif

Zeid and Royal Court Chief Marwan Al Qasem.

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(Continued on page 7)

Iranian leader Ayatollah

JPA warning to 3 weekly tabloids stirs controversy

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Three weekly newspapers, two of which have the largest circulation rate among all tabloids in Jordan, have come under heavy attack from the Jordan Press Association (JPA).

Shihab, Al Bilad and Hawadeth Al Sa'ab are accused of overstating facts and publishing material that "infringe upon the general ethics and moral standards."

In a memo sent to the chief editors of the weeklies, the JPA threatened to refer them to a disciplinary council if they refuse to comply with the association's laws and regulations.

A study carried out by the JPA's council over the past two months on issues selected randomly from the three weeklies found that the newspapers are publishing "fabricated stories, obscene photos and inaccurate news."

The JPA argues that Article 40-a-9 of the Press and Publications Law of 1993 bans the publication "of any news, reports, letters and photos that are in contradiction with the general ethics and morals."

JPA President Suleiman Qudah cited Article 50-a of the law makes journalists liable for prosecution if they did not comply with the law or any other law that is related to the journalism profession.

Mr. Qudah said the association would take punitive measures if the three weeklies continue to publish news and photos that are incompatible with the accepted norms and morals.

Even the language used is inappropriate, said Mr. Qudah. "There is a tremendous exaggeration and overstatement of facts and issues," he said.

Ali Israiri, managing editor of Hawadeth Al Sa'ab, says this is not true. "I challenge everyone if they can find a fabricated story or crime published in our newspaper," he said.

Jihad Momani, managing editor of Shihab, also refuted the allegations. He says the crime page in the weekly tabloid is translated from a German newspaper but date-lined and names have not been changed. Publishing photos mainly of semi-naked women is not part of the newspaper's policy either, he said.

"There was once a mistake when a coloured photo of a woman was published in black and white. It made her look as if she were not wearing anything," he said.

Mr. Momani admitted this was not the only time. The weekly, with a circulation of over 65,000, also published photos of women on Elat beach a couple of months ago.

But Mr. Momani said he did not believe that this was the reason behind the JPA's attack on the three weeklies.

"It's because we are an opposition newspaper that they target us," he asserted. "Because people like and buy our newspaper, the so-called colleagues (who work for other newspapers) have a certain interest (in fighting us)."

Since its establishment in 1983, Shihab has been a favourite platform for the opposition. Deputy Toujan Faisal, former deputies Mansour Murad and Fakhri

Kawar as well as independent Islamist Osama Alman have all been given the forum and even the advantage of having weekly columns to express their views vis-a-vis the government's policies and practices. Former Health Minister Abdul Rahim Malhas chose Shihab when he wanted to publish information concerning corruption in the health sector.

Shihab is also known for its harsh criticism and sarcastic caricatures of government officials, their policies and practices. Humorous anecdotes involving senior officials are the newspaper's specialty for pages 2 and 3.

Crimes, accidents and corruption cases are favoured by Shihab's administration over "unimportant" political stories.

"Shihab tries to expose government malpractices and corruption to the public," Mr. Momani said. "We are interested in the issues that are of interest to the people. Readers would be more interested in a bus accident that took the life of tens of people than in the visit of some foreign diplomatic team to the country."

The Islamic weekly Al Sabeel was the first to announce the JPA's attack on the three weeklies. Its editor-in-chief and member of the JPA's board, Hilm Al Asmar, said the association was very reluctant to make such a decision.

"It was after countless complaints and continued research that we decided to make a move," Mr. Asmar said. "Such fabricated and immoral news have a bad influence on the public. We have received numerous complaints from the public protesting the publication of such photos and news that might be harmful to their children."

"The media should present to the public what they need to solve problems instead of publishing a photo of a naked (woman) that makes us sick," he said.

Nidal Mansour, chief editor of Al Bilad, says the JPA cannot make a final judgement. What is moral or immoral is relative from one person to another, he said.

"Infringing upon the general ethics" is too general a term. I would not consider a woman wearing a short skirt as "infringing upon the general ethics," Mr. Mansour said. Al Bilad has a distribution rate of about 15,000 to 20,000.

Mr. Mansour said the association should not have taken any decision against the three weeklies without discussing it first with the chief editors of the publications. He accused the association of having ulterior motives.

"Why would the JPA take a move now?" he questioned.

"Why didn't they take an action when more important issues were at stake?"

Mr. Mansour said the association did not help journalists when the Press and Publications Department took some of them to court after the introduction of democracy in Jordan in 1989.

He claimed the association was not acting on its own initiative. He implied the government might be influencing the JPA's move "to muzzle freedom of speech under the slogan of protecting public freedoms."



RECONSTRUCTION: Hisham Karami, pyrotechnician with Solidere, the society for reconstruction of Beirut, gives orders by mobile phone before the destruction of a building in the old city centre of Beirut. France telecom and Finland

Jordanian businessmen to get familiarisation lectures on GSP

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

entry to the importing developed country.

While the system is relatively simple, there it also lays down a series of conditions and requirements that the exporter should meet to qualify for the preferential treatment, Ms. Haddad said. Jordan is a member of the developed countries offer to developing countries during a three-day seminar to be held in Amman this month.

According to officials, Jordanian exporters have not been able to fully take advantage of the available opportunity mostly because they were not fully aware of its various aspects, a shortcoming that is expected to be addressed at the Jan. 22-24 seminar in Amman.

Nearly 20 countries from the developed world are signatories to the GSP accord, making it an attractive avenue to boost exports if exporters are willing to abide by the guidelines and part of the agreement.

The Italian government is financing the seminar. A 32-member Italian team representing the Arab-Italian Chamber of Commerce on the third day of the event and try to familiarise the audience with the Italian experience with GSP. Ms. Haddad told the Jordan Times.

In addition to UNCTAD officials, lecturers addressing the seminar would include American European experts in international trade practices related to GSP and Japanese.

In the opinion of World Bank experts, limitations

adopted by most industrial countries and peculiar features of the economic policies of beneficiaries of the system, the developing countries have not gained much from GSP. They point out that the imports of the U.S., a signature GSP beneficiary countries are less than half of its overall imports from developing countries and less than 15 percent of the trade covered under GSP are extended preferential treatment in customs duties.

Recent studies have also found that imports into the European Union countries from non-GSP developing countries were growing at a faster rate than those from countries covered under GSP.

The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which has been updated into the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to which Jordan is seeking entry, allows GSP trade under controlled conditions, however, the scope of improving trade under GATT/WTO is seen much more attractive to the developing countries rather than confirming themselves to GSP.

Despite the limited international impact of GSP, Jordan stands to benefit from the system since the Kingdom has enough room to manoeuvre, given the relatively low level of its utilisation of the agreement.

No group has claimed responsibility for the attack. In the past Iraq has pointed the finger at Israeli agents or Iran.

In October last year a bomb exploded in a prayer room at Iraq's Ministry of Religious Affairs, killing a senior official and seriously wounding five people.

Technical problem caused Iran plane crash - black box

TEHRAN (AFP) — Technical difficulties caused the crash of an Iranian air force plane which killed 12 people including Iran's air force chief, according to the Iranian news agency IRNA said.

The plane, a U.S.-made Star Jet, was on a flight Thursday from the central city of Isfahan to Tehran, but it turned back shortly after take-off.

It caught fire before crash-landing at Shahid Babai military air base in Isfahan.

Officials have said the pilot had noticed changes in the air pressure in the cockpit after the plane reached an altitude of 700 metres and tried to make an emergency landing.

Iranian newspapers and several deputies have demanded an explanation into the crash.

Apart from the air force commander General Mansur Sattari, five top air force officials were killed along with six crewmen.

Iranian leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was among thousands of people attending the ceremony in front of an air force base in eastern Tehran.

Political, military and religious officials also attended the funeral.

Mourners carried the coffins, draped in the Iranian flag and decorated with flowers, for several kilometres.

The bodies were then buried by helicopter to the mausoleum of the founder of the Islamic republic, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, in southern Tehran for prayer and several of them on to nearby Behesht-e-Zahra cemetery for burial.

Other victims were to be buried in their hometowns.

The Tehran bazaar worked only a half-day in a gesture of mourning and the Iranian flag flew at half-mast throughout the country.

A member of parliament, Ali Movahedi Savoji, called on transportation and intelligence officials to provide an "acceptable explanation" for the crash.

The National Security Council, the country's high-

Baghdad blast kills 12-year-old

BAGHDAD (R) — A bomb in a tin killed a 12-year-old Iraqi boy in a residential area of Baghdad, Babel newspaper said on Monday.

The explosion on Sunday afternoon tore the child's body apart, said the newspaper, which is owned by President Saddam Hussein's son Uday.

It blamed the blast on "criminals" but did not say who was behind the first such explosion of the New Year.

The child was playing with a tin thrown in the area in which the criminals with rancour against our people had hidden the explosive charge," Babel said.

It said the explosion "ripped the body of this innocent child apart."

Babel said the blast took place in Al Shabib township in Baghdad.

The explosion was not reported by the official Iraqi Press Agency (INA) or by state-run newspapers, television or radio.

No group has claimed responsibility for the attack. In the past Iraq has pointed the finger at Israeli agents or Iran.

In October last year a bomb exploded in a prayer room at Iraq's Ministry of Religious Affairs, killing a senior official and seriously wounding five people.

Lady fights to save Beirut from bulldozers

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lady Yvonne Cochrane and her Association for the Protection of Ancient Sites and Homes are waging an uphill struggle to save old Beirut from the bulldozers of post-war reconstruction.

The group, known as French acronym APSAD, is back in business after a paralytic during the 1975-1990 civil war and its members now meet again in her 19th century palace, which itself bears scars from the conflict.

"Beirut was once a jewel of the Mediterranean. It has become a garbage dump," Lady Cochrane said bluntly.

The Lebanese have become like demented ants. They're building without restraint, and as a result we're covering the country with shantytowns. We're killing Lebanon," she told AFP.

Born to the wealthy Lebanese Stroh family and wife of an Irish lord, Lady Cochrane is highly critical of the post-war reconstruction projects, especially in the city centre.

She denounced the belief of many that Beirut is destined to become a new Hong Kong.

"This dream does not correspond to reality: the Lebanese are not big businessmen but excellent merchants," said Lady Cochrane, adding she was "sometimes discouraged but still hopeful."

APSAD, whose executive committee includes architects, bankers, businessmen and art lovers, is fighting for our roots," she said, denying it was elitist.

"We have lost our roots. Our fight is not just to save some old stones, it's a battle for the environment, for a better quality of life.

"If we must rebuild, it should be done in the appropriate manner," she said, charging that builders were only interested in financial gains.

"We're surrounded by concrete. There are no public parks or private gardens left. It's tragic for children and for

the future."

Her group has limited financial means to confront what Lady Cochrane described as the "archaeological massacre" of Beirut and its "ignorant municipality."

The government has prioritised APSAD \$12,000 in annual assistance but the group counts more on the press to stop bulldozers from destroying the last buildings of the old Beirut to make way for modern buildings.

"We have nothing left but persuasion," she said.

Prime Minister Rafik Hariri — the key backer of Lebanon's multi-billion reconstruction projects — altered a large part of his initial plan for the city centre after facing criticism from abroad, Lady Cochrane said.

"After the destruction of several splendid houses, in the city centre, he protected a considerable number of other buildings," she said.

According to Lady Cochrane, some 200 old buildings have been spared destruction by Solidere, the company in charge of rebuilding Beirut city centre and in which Mr. Hariri is a key shareholder.

Lady Cochrane admitted however that despite being staunchly opposed to Solidere's plans, she has started to cooperate with the firm's French advisor, Jean-Paul Lebe.

"We have proposed to Mr. Hariri plans to safeguard an entire neighbourhood of Beirut and he has agreed," he said.

Her next step is to rally around APSAD the assistance of bankers and industrialists in an effort to finance the rehabilitation of her city.

"Five to six years from now, Lebanon will be hit by a tragic real estate crisis because all these buildings being erected are destined to remain empty."

"But this crisis will work to our advantage. That is when we can really rebuild properly and Lebanon could once again become the garden of the Middle East," she predicted.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Body found in dam reservoir

AMMAN (Petra) — A civil defence team on Monday pulled out the body of an unidentified man aged about 55 years from the King Talal Dam reservoir, the Civil Defence Department (CDD) said. It said local officials employed at the dam by the Jordan Valley Authority had spotted the body. No details were available.

Jury selection begins in New York trial

NEW YORK (AFP) — Lawyers began questioning potential jurors under tight security about their religious beliefs and their views on Islam Monday for the trial of a dozen people accused of plotting to bomb New York landmarks.

The first day of jury selection opened in the downtown Manhattan court, where Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman and 11 others accused in the case will stand trial. City police conducting intensive searches were backed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, who have been guarding Judge Michael Mukasey and prosecutors for the past two months.

Iranian minister slams Iraqi policy

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Mohammad Hashemi on Monday slammed Iraq's policy towards its Gulf neighbours at the start of a three-day visit to Kuwait. "Baghdad's continuing policy of destabilisation in the region does not benefit any state in the Gulf, including Iraq, in the search for peace and stability," the official Kuwaiti agency KUNA quoted Mr. Hashemi as saying here. He said Iran's relations with Iraq were "not satisfactory" and urged Baghdad to implement U.N. Security Council resolutions relating to the 1991 Gulf war in which Iraqi forces were driven from Kuwait. "We back these resolutions and Iraq, which has recognised the sovereignty of Kuwait, must conform to all the other international demands," Mr. Hashemi said, adding that Tehran rejected "any changes to the borders in the Gulf region."

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

06:28 Vienna (OS) 06:59 Amsterdam (KL) 06:59 Bucharest (RO)

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Home News



TAKING THE OATH: Newly-appointed and the new Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Jordanian Ambassador to Iraq Bassam Qaqish Kabbari. Mr. Qaqish is a former minister, Monday takes the oath of office before His Excellency the Amman Regional Authority and Majesty King Hussein at the Royal Court, served as inspector general of the army. Mr. Abu Nowar, ambassador to Switzerland, waits to take his turn. Commission, and his last posting was as the swearing-in ceremony was attended by chairman of the Amman Financial Market Chief of the Royal Court Marwan Al Qasem (Petra photo)

Choice of social development minister important to Jordan's poor, unemployed

By Saad Silawi
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — If the choice of ministers of foreign affairs, information, tourism and others was an important task for Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, so was the choice of minister of social development because the new government is in need of every potential help to deal with the basic responsibility of curtailing poverty in Jordan.

Her next step is to approach APSAD to get the assistance of bankers and financiers in an effort to fund the rehabilitation of Beirut. "Five to six years from now, Lebanon will be back to its pre-war level and will be a major player in the Middle East," she predicted.

The Ministry of Social Development cares for 220,000 needy people assuming that each of the 45,000 poor families in Jordan comprises five persons only. Of these, an estimated 40 per cent live below the poverty line and are in most urgent need for help.

The outgoing Ministry of Social Development has doubtless worked arduously and relentlessly to overcome the problem of poverty, but these efforts require follow-up and extra endeavours to help attain the goal of eradicating or decreasing the level of poverty.

Aqaba port business falls 8.7%

By Suleiman Al-Khalidi
Reuters

AMMAN — Business at the Red Sea port of Aqaba, declining since the 1990 Gulf crisis, fell 8.7 per cent in 1994 mainly because of a U.N. trade embargo on Iraq, a main transit trade partner.

Figures released by the Port Corporation of Aqaba and obtained by Reuters on Monday showed last year's imports and exports totalled around 10,463 million tonnes from 11,634 million tonnes in 1993.

Tonnage through Aqaba has nearly halved from a peak of 20 million tonnes in 1988 before Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, when at least a third of Aqaba's cargo was Baghdad-bound.

"Aqaba continues to suffer from the lack of Iraqi cargo and because of Iraq's financial situation due to the embargo they are unable to import what they actually need," Tawfiq Kawar, chairman of the Jordanian Shipping Agents Association, told Reuters.

Mr. Kawar said prospects in 1995 for the port — now working at half capacity — hinged on easing of sanctions.

Total imports fell 25.5 per cent to 3,909 million tonnes in 1994, from 5,255 million tonnes in 1993.

Jordan, following an IMF-

directed economic reform plan, managed to narrow its trade deficit by an estimated seven per cent in 1994 to nearly \$2.102 billion with a 16 per cent rise in exports.

Total exports rose 2.7 per cent to 6,556,210 tonnes in 1994 from 6,381,000 tonnes in 1993 with help by better performance by Jordan's key phosphate and potash industries.

Aqaba imports reached 9,143 million tonnes in 1988 and exports stood at 10,953 million tonnes in 1987 — both record years with at least 70 per cent of loaded tonnage to Iraq.

Iraq halved its wheat and sugar imports in 1994 with around 350,000 tonnes of wheat from over one million tonnes in 1993 and only 150,000 tonnes of sugar in 1994, traders said.

Sugar imports fell 4.7 per cent to 339,134 tonnes in 1994 from 356,000 tonnes in 1993, and with an annual domestic supply of around 180,000 tonnes, the rest was re-exported to Iraq.

Economists say transit trade continues to decline because of five-year-old trade sanctions on Iraq, rising only slightly from 38,562 tonnes in 1994 against a low of 28,279 tonnes in 1993.

Sweeping U.N. trade sanctions only allow for imports of basic food, medicines and other humanitarian goods.

Jordan, the world's second largest exporter of phosphates, saw sales of its main hard currency earner rise to 3,714,251 tonnes in 1994 against 3,564,960 tonnes a year earlier.

Ammonia and sulphur imports used in Jordan's fertiliser industry rose to 503,484 tonnes in 1994 from 354,000 tonnes in 1993. Jordan previously received 60 per cent of its sulphur from Iraq before 1990, but in 1994 most of it came from Saudi Arabia.

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

POETRY RECITAL

★ Poetry recital by Palestinian poet Samih Al Qasem at Philadelphia Hotel at 7:00 p.m.

CONCERT

★ Camerata Köln presented in concert (recorder, flute, oboe, violin, viola, cello, contrabass, and harpsichord) at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m. (programme includes pieces by Bach, Telemann, and others).

NEWS

★ ABC News Highlights and McNeil-Lehrer News Hour at the American Center at 5:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

★ Exhibition of works by Saad Khalil at the Royal Cultural Centre.
★ Exhibition of works by Mahmud Obaidi at Darat Al Funun. Also showing the exhibition of contemporary Arab artists.
★ Exhibition of paintings by Ismail and Tamer Shamout at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation.

Jordan, Qatar explore future cooperation

AMMAN (Petra) — Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabbari Monday began his first day in office meeting with visiting Qatari Foreign Ministry Under-Secretary Ahmad Ben Abdullah Al Mahmoud.

The Qatari official, who started a several-day visit to Jordan Sunday, said that he hoped to strengthen bilateral ties through a series of agreements and protocols regulating cooperation between Jordan and Qatar in all fields.

Mr. Kabbari, praising the existing strong ties between the two Arab states, told Mr. Mahmoud that Qatar's policies are viewed with deep respect and appreciation by the Jordanian leadership.

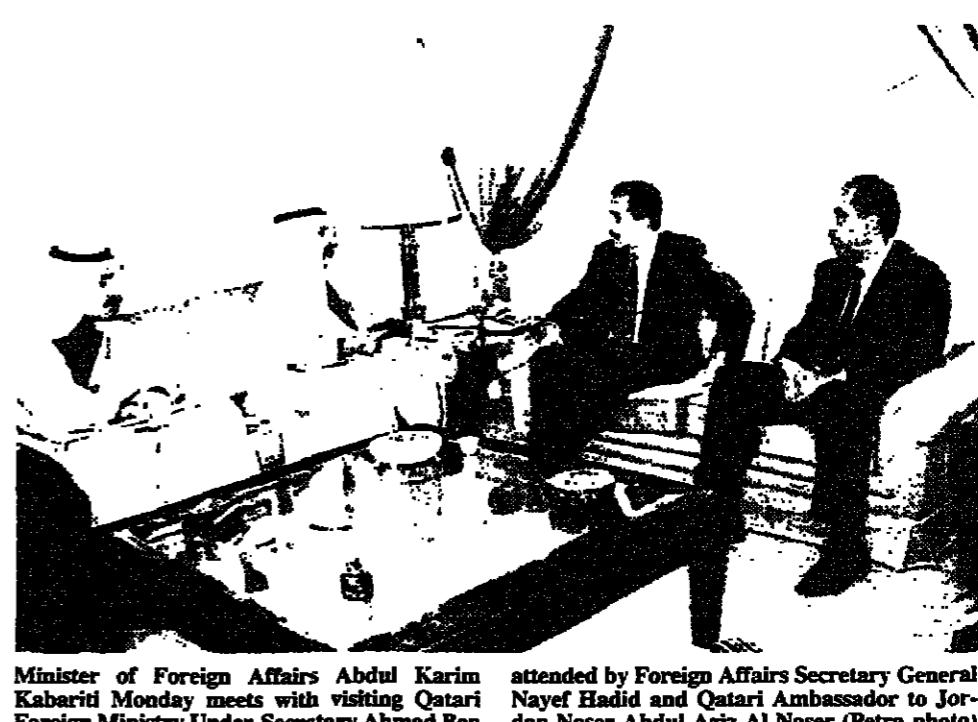
Mr. Mahmoud earlier held meetings with Foreign Ministry Secretary General Nayef Hadid during which the two men reviewed progress in the implementation of previous agreements and discussed a

possible date for the joint Jordanian-Qatari higher ministerial committee meeting to conclude agreements in economic, health, cultural, land and air transport and informational fields.

Mr. Mahmoud, who is accompanied by a delegation from his ministry, said there are numerous areas for joint cooperation especially in investments, trade, communications, natural gas technology, transport, culture and education.

The Qatari official said his mission here was to prepare the ground for the higher joint committee meeting to be held in Doha.

According to Mr. Hadid, agreements which will be signed by the higher committee are designed to upgrade existing agreements, adding that the two sides are considering the establishment of a joint university and a joint bank.



Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdul Karim Kabbari Monday meets with visiting Qatari Foreign Ministry Under-Secretary Ahmad Ben Abdullah Al Mahmoud. The meeting was attended by Foreign Affairs Secretary General Nayef Hadid and Qatari Ambassador to Jordan Naser Abdul Aziz Al Naser (Petra photo)

Department records 1994 surge in investments

By a Jordan Times
Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan witnessed a surge of investment activity in the last four months of 1994 and could expect the trend to continue during 1995, says the head of the Investment Promotion Department of the Ministry of Industry

"We saw a strong surge in investment activity in the last four months of last year and the trend is continuing," Mr. Hindawi told the Jordan Times. "We are confident that Jordan would see greater investment activity in 1995 and 1996 of a much higher level than we saw in 1994."

As a result of the department's efforts, the total number of new commercial entities as a "one-stop window" of the government for investors in the emerging era of peace that is expected to witness heightened economic activity.

The department handles all potential investors in the Kingdom by providing information and facilitates the procedures related to registering and licensing

new commercial entities as a "one-stop window" of the government for investors in the emerging era of peace that is expected to witness heightened economic activity.

"We saw a strong surge in investment activity in the last four months of last year and the trend is continuing," Mr. Hindawi told the Jordan Times. "We are confident that Jordan would see greater investment activity in 1995 and 1996 of a much higher level than we saw in 1994."

At a press conference he addressed on Sunday, Mr. Hindawi released figures related to new investments in the Kingdom during 1994.

He said the capital investments of JD 257 million registered during the year reflected a 100 per cent increase over the previous year.

The total number of new

projects launched during 1994 was 123, compared to 78 in 1993. Ninety-two of the new projects were given the status of "approved economic projects" which enjoy exemptions from customs duties and taxation. Fifty-eight of the 78 new projects launched in 1993 were given the same distinction.

The Law on Encouragement of Investments of 1987 defines "approved economic projects" as those in the sectors of industry and mining, agriculture, livestock and fisheries, tourism, hotels, transport and hospitals.

The total capital invested in new projects in 1994 was JD 257 million, of which JD 225 million went to the "approved economic projects" category, compared with JD 160 million and JD 157 million respectively in 1993.

Loans from different

sources accounted for JD 101 million of the new capital invested during the year, and the net worth of exemptions extended to the "approved economic projects" was JD 140 million.

The new projects created

9,264 job opportunities

compared with 5,612 in 1993, said Mr. Hindawi.

The output of the

"approved economic projects" in industry during 1994 was worth JD 317 million. More than half of the output — JD 172 million — were exported.

Under a categorisation

adopted by the government

175 projects were launched

in the "A" zone — Amman

and its environs — 11 in

"B" zone and 9 in zone

"C."

The Investment Promotion

Department completed

processing all

applications for licensing

and registration it received during

the first half of 1995, Mr. Hindawi said.

The distribution of the projects is fair and even throughout the different governorates of the Kingdom, he said.

Ministry completes hospital in Deir Abi Saeed

DEIR ABI SAEED (J.T.) — The Health Ministry announced the completion of a 69-bed hospital at Deir Abi Saeed in Irbid Governorate and said that the premises will become operational in the first quarter of 1995.

Jamal Sharman, head of the health department at the Kura district which includes Deir Abi Saeed, said the JD\$

million hospital has 69 beds, 15 of which will be used for emergencies and intensive care. Dr. Sharman added that catering and maintenance contracts have been awarded to a local company.

The Kura district has 12 health centres in addition to nine mother and child health care centres which will complement the work of the new

hospital, Dr. Sharman said. He said he hoped that the health ministry's budget this year would allow further expansion in health services including the construction of three new health centres at Judeita, Tibneh and Ashrafiya villages.

With the completion of the Deir Abi Saeed Hospital, Jordan now has 17

government-owned hospitals in addition to numerous health centres around the country.

According to health ministry statistics Sunday, the other hospitals are Al Bashir in Amman, Princess Badia and Princess Basma hospitals in Irbid, Nadim in Madaba, Karak, Ramtha, Salt,

Ajloun, Abu Obeida and Maath in the Jordan Valley, Mafrqa, Maan, Fuheis, Jerash and Al Husn hospitals.

According to Dr. Sharman, apart from providing health services, his department is responsible for laboratory testing of water sources in the district.

Women's group opens legal advice hotline

By Samir Barhoum
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Because the Business and Professional Women's Club (BPWC) started to receive an annual average of 700 women clients seeking legal advice on various issues, the club found it imperative to launch a hotline service to receive calls by such individuals.

As soon as the hotline service was introduced at the beginning of the year, the club began receiving more than eight calls per day, according to BPWC Director General Buthaina Jardaneh.

Ms. Jardaneh said the club established a legal consultancy service for women in 1984. The office, she said, seeks to help women obtain their legal rights and basic needs, whether economic, social or political.

The idea of establishing the office resulted from the BPWC's conviction that promoting the civil, political and legal rights of women and providing women with access to judicial and political systems of the country are paramount. Ms. Jardaneh said, adding that the office was opened after a study found that women needed to be familiarised with their rights and duties, especially after becoming actively involved in the labour market and development process.

"Despite the progress witnessed in our legislation in general terms, there still exists a gap between these laws and their implementation with regards to women," she said.

BPWC President Hind Abdul Jaber said that when increasing numbers of women began seeking advice from the club on legal matters and problems facing them, the BPWC service

decided to launch the hotline service, the first such service in an Arab country, she added.

Ms. Abdul Jaber said that the BPWC noticed that most of those calling at the office were seeking legal advice rather than court action.

She said most of the cases were resolved amicably, and about 300 cases required a court settlement.

The BPWC is able to help in only 170-180 of the court cases because of its limited financial resources, she added.

Because of the success of the experience and to make it easier for women living in remote areas to have access to the BPWC's legal services, the hotline service

was put into force, Ms. Jardaneh said, pointing out that many women would find it difficult to leave their families or jobs, and it would be more convenient for them to receive advice over the phone.

She said the hotline service was limited to legal counselling because it is difficult to offer advice on social, psychological and other kinds of problems over the phone. In some cases, it is difficult to offer legal advice over the phone, so the callers are requested to visit the BPWC premises, she said.

The BPWC is the largest of the four clubs that form the Jordanian Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs.</

Sri Lanka truce holds in northeast

COLOMBO (AFP) — Sri Lankan security forces and separatist Tamil rebels continued to observe a truce for a second straight day Monday, as defence authorities took further measures to prevent violations, officials said.

Barring one "very minor incident" no violations were reported by mid-day Monday since the truce between troops and the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) came into effect Sunday in the war-torn northeast of the island, officials said.

"Everyone is holding their fire. Up to now we have not received any reports of violence of any sort," said military spokesman Brigadier Nalai Jayakody.

Troops at Ivakachchi camp in the north had reported "sighting" a group of Tamil guerrillas Sunday within the demilitarised zone, but the issue was quickly resolved, Brig. Jayakody said.

"It was a bit of a misunderstanding. We are not even

treating it as an incident. The message has still to trickle down to their ranks. We have sorted it out," Brig. Jayakody said.

Under the truce agreement signed between President Chandrika Kumaratunga and LTTE supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran, both sides agreed to a 600-metre demilitarised zone in the northeast.

Six peace committees headed by representatives from Norway, Netherlands and Canada have been set up to monitor the truce. The foreign observers are due here in the next couple of days.

To ensure there were no violations, both sides were in contact through direct radio links set up Sunday, military officials said.

Police chief Frank De Silva has ordered police in the northeast not to carry out any action that could be construed as a truce violation

and to refer crucial decisions to regional military commanders.

"This means that police manning checkpoints can no longer arrest a person on suspicion without referring the matter to the top army officer in that area," a defense official said.

Police had set up dozens of checkpoints, to prevent movement of LTTE guerrillas between their bases and towns and villages in the northeast where they want to set up a separate Tamil homeland.

The truce accord allows LTTE cadres to move into populated areas. This has prompted concern among rival Tamil groups who fear the LTTE will try to strengthen their presence in the east.

The LTTE controls large parts of the north but have been confined mainly to jungles in the east since a major army offensive against

them in 1991. The government has also permitted fishing in specified areas off the northern coast under the truce government sealed Thursday after two rounds of peace talks in the LTTE stronghold of northern Jaffna.

However, fishing will be restricted within a two nautical mile zone along the coast, the official said.

Fishing had been banned off the entire northern coast since June 1990 when fighting renewed between government troops and LTTE guerrillas to prevent rebels from using sea routes to mount attacks on coastal military facilities.

Shortly after the truce took effect, the LTTE also announced that it was operating a day-time ferry across the Jaffna lagoon to allow civilians to travel between the rebel-controlled northern Jaffna peninsula and the mainland.



Jain ascetic Sahajmuni Mahavir, aged 62 who has been fasting for world peace in a north Bombay suburb for the past 201 days, is carried staff to a public reception in his home which was attended by several hundred thousand devotees. Sahajmuni was to

finish his fast Sunday but an aide said he would do so only after sunrise Monday as Jainism, a 2,400-year-old offshoot of Hinduism, does not permit eating between sunset and sunrise. (AFP photo)

Monk breaks 201-day fast for world peace

BOMBAY (AFP) — An Indian ascetic broke his 201-day fast for world peace at a ceremony Monday at his small Indian religious community attended by fellow monks and nuns.

Sahajmuni Mahavir, 62, ate his first solid food in nearly seven months just after sunrise Monday at the House of Non-Violence here, his assistants said.

Bombay's normally bustling wholesale textile markets were closed to honour the breaking of the fast by the Jain ascetic, whose fast has captured the imagination of this Indian commercial capital.

Local news reports said the flooding in Sonoma and Napa counties, which lie just to the north of San Francisco, was the worst in the area in almost 10 years.

Two storms in two days dropped up to five inches (12 cm) of rain in parts of Northern California, causing the Napa and Russian Rivers to break their banks, flooding some houses and threatening many more.

The waters flooded some vineyards in the wine-producing region and forced the closure of many roads, while some residents built walls of sandbags to keep out the floodwaters.

One of the worst-hit towns was Guerneville in Sonoma County where the Russian River had already risen to 37 feet (11 metres) — five feet (1.5 metres) above flood level — by Sunday evening and was expected to peak at 48 feet (14 metres) at mid-night.

The rain continued to pour Sunday evening, swelling the rivers even more. More rain was forecast for Monday.

A local state of emergency was declared in Napa County where the rising Napa River threatened to flood houses in the towns of Calistoga, Yountville and St. Helena, a county information officer said.

About 500 people voluntarily evacuated their homes in the three towns, he said. Most of the evacuees stayed with friends or relatives.

When the aircraft they had targeted turned out to be missing a battery, police said.

Instead, ill-equipped for harsh weather, they were forced to forage and live rough on the land as a massive police dragnet spread over the small island, tightening around them until they were recaptured Sunday without a struggle.

But hours later, as authorities who had been under fire for the escape rejoiced, three inmates at the medium-security Littlehey Prison in central England, escaped late Sunday within hours of the recapture of the three earlier escapees.

That trio — two murderers and a bomber-arsenal all serving life — fled over the wall of the high-security Parkhurst Prison on the Isle of Wight off Britain's south coast last week using a homemade pass-key and ladder, officials said.

But their apparent plan to fly a stolen private plane to the mainland — one of them was a pilot — went awry

stitched white cotton robe. A mask covers his nose and mouth so that he does not inhale insects or microscopic creatures.

Jain ascetics never travel by mechanised transport, fearing the machines could crush insects. They travel on foot, sweeping the path before them with a broom or employing someone to do so.

Sahajmuni, who reportedly left home at the age of 12 and joined a nomadic group of Jain ascetics, is a veteran faster. A pamphlet handed out by his aides says he first went without food for three weeks, in 1964.

He fasted every year after that, gradually increasing the number of consecutive days to 131 in 1993.

Britain's monarchy doomed, poll says

LONDON (R) — Most of Queen Elizabeth's subjects believe Britain's royal family is doomed and will disappear in the coming century, according to a poll published Monday.

The "Guardian-ICM" poll will come as bad news for the royal family damaged by revelations about the marriage

breakdown of heir-to-the-throne Prince Charles and Princess Diana.

Although just 26 per cent of those polled wanted to abolish the monarchy another 24 per cent said they were "not especially keen" on it and supported it only because it was "better than the alternatives." Only 36 per cent described themselves as "strong supporters."

Asked whether Britain

would still have a monarch in half a century, 52 per cent

said they believed the royal

family would still exist while 49 per cent said no. This

compared with 42 per cent and 34 per cent respectively two years ago.

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The Littlehey escape, occurring only 10 miles from Prime Minister John Major's family home, was the latest in a spate of prison misdeeds that has put heat on Home Secretary Michael Howard, who last week offered his resignation if his office's policies were found at blame.

On Jan. 1, accused serial killer Frederick West hanged himself in the Birmingham prison cell where he was awaiting trial on 12 murder counts.

John Bartell, chairman of the Prison Officers' Association, said prison overcrowding had resulted in the Littlehey escapees — convicted robbers and burglars — being incarcerated in a facility not

commensurate with the severity of their crimes.

"Overcrowding throughout the system causes governors to reclassify or downgrade prisoners in order to create space, and put them into so-called Category C prisons totally unsuited for their confinement," he told BBC radio.

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Mr. Howard's administration has already indicated its willingness to accommodate Japanese war sensitivities, especially over the estimated 300,000 people killed in the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945.

Following Japanese objections last month, the administration intervened to scrap plans for a World War II memorial postage stamp bearing a mushroom cloud and the phrase "Atomic bombs bashed war's end".

While officials say the agenda for Wednesday's summit is up to the two leaders themselves, the Japanese Foreign Ministry is particularly keen to promote bilateral cooperation in various global issues.

The two sides expect to reach an agreement on Japanese government purchases of foreign computers some time this week and are also said to be close to an accord on improving foreign access to Japan's financial services market.

With the diminished focus on trade and amid looming

Mighty mouse halts airliner

STOCKHOLM (AFP) — An elusive and stubborn mouse made fools of Swedish airline SAS, forcing it to cancel a New York-bound flight after the tiny stowaway was discovered on board, Dagens Nyheter said Sunday. The mouse was rummaged Saturday as it roamed freely around the forward half of the plane during a trans-Atlantic flight to Sweden. When relieved passengers landed in Stockholm, the plane was combed from cockpit to tail, but turned up no sign of the crafty creature. Security regulations bar tiny little creatures, and SAS were forced to cancel the return leg to New York. U.S.-bound passengers had to fly via Oslo instead. The mouse flew on alone to Copenhagen.

Swedish album, Lion King soundtrack top 1994 U.S. hits

NASHVILLE, Tennessee (AFP) — Swedish rock group Ace of Base's "The Sign" and the multi-artist soundtrack for Disney's "The Lion King" tied in first place on the 1994 best-selling album list, a trade group said. Each album sold seven million copies, said the Recording Industry Association of America. The association reports monthly sales in one-million increments. Rounding out the top-five album slots were "II" by Boyz II Men, "August and Everything After" by Counting Crows and "Vs." by Pearl Jam — each sold five million — and "Doggystyle" by Snoop Doggy Dogg, four million.

Last year's album heavyweights are dwarfed by the all-time mega-giant, Michael Jackson's 1983 "Thriller," which has sold 24 million copies in the United States and millions more worldwide.

In the singles category, "I Wanna Know What Love Is" by Boyz II Men, "August and Everything After" by Counting Crows and "Vs." by Pearl Jam — each sold five million — and "Doggystyle" by Snoop Doggy Dogg, four million.

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World News

Rwanda's army says its troops killed 12

BUSANZE CAMP, Rwanda (R) — Rwanda's government army said Monday its troops attacked a camp in the southwest where 12 homeless people were slaughtered and more than 30 were wounded.

A spokesman for the Rwanda Patriotic Army (RPA) said two officers were arrested in connection with Saturday's attack on Busanze Camp near the border with Burundi in which he said 11 people were killed.

Aid workers who visited Busanze Sunday found a trench filled with 12 corpses, five of them children, with limbs broken by machete blows and executed with a bullet to the back of the head.

Thirty-six wounded were taken from the camp to the medical Emergency Relief International health centre at Runyonyi. U.N. officials confirmed that 12 people were killed in the attack.

Some aid workers Sunday said they suspected gunmen loyal to the ousted Hutu regime in Rwanda were behind the brutal raid.

But RPA spokesman Major Wilson Ruyasire told Reuters a grenade was thrown at an unauthorised RPA foot patrol outside the camp. The patrol opened fire and killed 11 people.

"The second lieutenant leading the patrol has been arrested," Maj. Ruyasire said. "And the acting area commander has also been arrested as the patrol was not



Australian U.N. soldiers give first aid to one of the 36 Huts, refugees that were injured during an attack by Rwandan troops in a southwestern Rwandan refugee camp (AFP photo) officially deployed.

"Other means rather than shooting should have been used to search the camp after the grenade was thrown," he added.

A woman survivor treated at Runyonyi with blood dripping from a double puncture wound to her elbow, told Reuters:

"They surrounded the camp, came in with machetes and hoes to beat us and cut down the shelter, then started shooting."

In the medical centre a young girl lay on a mattress, her knees shattered by one of the bullets that turned the camp in a former French safe zone into a graveyard. She said her parents were killed.

The homeless fled Busanze after the attack. Crude huts were cut down and burned by Monday and their occupants had taken refuge in neighbouring camps or the region's rolling hills.

Six months ago 6,000 Hutus sought sanctuary in Busanze, one of many camps in the southwest, as the Tutsi-dominated Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) advanced across the country at the height of civil war.

The homeless were protected first by French troops and then by U.N. observers against the threat of revenge killings after the massacre of up to one million Tutsis and Hutus by militiamen loyal to the former government from April to July.

Following the RPF victory, the new government said camps for the displaced had to be closed and people would return to their homes.

The southwest has been plagued by cross-border raids over the past two weeks and aid workers say tensions was running high.

"RPA soldiers are shooting at anything that moves on Lake Kivu," an aid worker said Monday, adding there was a lot of tension in the south especially at camps for displaced people.

He said attacks by militiamen loyal to the ousted Rwandan regime and RPA counter-attacks were a recipe for disaster.

Busanze was hit the same day as leaders of Rwanda, Burundi, Zaire, Uganda, Kenya, Zambia and Tanzania met in the Kenyan capital Nairobi in a bid to end the crisis caused by two million Rwandan refugees.

They adopted a strategy to combat insecurity after Rwanda's genocide and encourage refugees home but diplomats said finding the needed political will and money was a problem.

Bosnia truce talks bog down

SARAJEVO (Agencies) — United Nations efforts to consolidate Bosnia's ceasefire ran into difficulties Monday as Serbs and the government side failed to agree on the status of a demilitarised zone near Sarajevo.

A meeting of rival military commanders scheduled for Wednesday at Sarajevo Airport to discuss implementation of the four-month "cessation of hostilities" appeared in question, while regional negotiations also came under strain.

U.N. spokesman Major Herve Gourmelon told reporters that a meeting Sunday between the commander of U.N. troops in Bosnia, Lieutenant-General Sir Michael Rose, and Bosnian Serb Army chief General Ratko Mladić "was not overly positive."

The Bosnian Serbs had refused to reopen supply roads into Sarajevo, as called for in the ceasefire signed on Dec. 31, unless troops of the Muslim-dominated Bosnian government army vacated the demilitarised zone on Mount Igman, southwest of Sarajevo.

Serbs were also blocking a U.N. request to evacuate wounded from the Muslim enclave in eastern Bosnia, Maj. Gourmelon said.

Adding new conditions, Gen. Mladić also demanded that government troops must quit ground they seized on the fringes of the zone.

The U.N. special envoy to former Yugoslavia, Yasushi Akashi, said the world body wanted full and immediate compliance with the cessation of hostilities agreement.

If Gen. Mladić was adding new conditions then the United Nations would take the matter up with Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadžić.

area saw light shelling during the reporting period.

In the only reported incident in Sarajevo, a grenade exploded near a French U.N. armoured vehicle, badly shaking the crew but causing no serious injuries.

The four-month ceasefire, brokered with the help of former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, was intended to pave the way for peace talks on a settlement of the 33-month-old war in Bosnia.

"We want to get the withdrawal first and then General Rose will see what to do," Maj. Gourmelon told Reuters.

United Nations troops planned another ground inspection of the Mount Igman demilitarised zone later Monday to check whether Bosnian government soldiers had quit the last lookout point they were known to be occupying.

The patrol would be undertaken if a Bosnian army liaison officer showed up to act as a guide through the steep, wooded slopes, now thickly covered in snow.

A helicopter reconnaissance was also possible but that depended on the mountain fog lifting.

Despite disagreements on implementing the truce agreement, the United Nations said it was still generally holding in most of Bosnia, which was described as "quiet and calm" over the past 24 hours.

The only exception was the Bihać enclave in the northwest, where rebel Serb and Muslim elements have not signed the truce. The Bihać

envoys from the five-nation "contact group," who met in Bonn last week and will reconvene in Paris Tuesday, are seeking to inject fresh impetus into a peace plan.

"We accepted under terms of take-it-or-leave-it. We took it, they left it."

Mr. Izetbegović earlier had repeated his government's insistence that before peace talks can resume, "the Serb side must accept the plan."

Unveiled last July by Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the United States, the proposal would allot the Bosnian Serbs 49 per cent of Bosnia, down from the 70 per cent they have seized in 33-month of war.

Serb authorities rejected the plan and the proposed land distribution, while the Muslim-led government, which would share 31 per cent of the territory with Bosnian Croats, accepted it.

The broad outline of the deal had initially been presented as non-negotiable. But at a meeting in Brussels in December the contact group — to the great annoyance of the Bosnian government — decided that the land division "can be adjusted by mutual agreement between the parties."

Bangladesh politicians hint at move to end crisis

DHAKA (R) — Bangladeshi opposition leaders said Monday they were planning a 72-hour general strike before Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting at the beginning of February, but would not rule out chances of a compromise with the government over demands for early elections.

They said the marathon strike could start any day after Jan. 19, when opposition parties called for a nationwide transport blockade to force Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia to accept their demands.

"It could either be Jan. 21-23 or Jan. 25 onwards," said one leader, adding that the "time is very sensitive."

He and his colleagues acknowledged to reporters that there had been a fresh move to try to find a compromise between Mrs. Zia and her main rival, Sheikh Hasina of the Awami League.

They declined to give details or identify the mediators. The government also declined to comment.

"We don't want this last move to be periled by over-publicity, misinterpretation of statements or just because

of too much guessing," said one leader of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

Opposition legislators, who have boycotted parliament since last February, formally quit on Dec. 28, adding to pressure on the BNP to accept demands for elections under a neutral caretaker government.

Mrs. Hasina repeated her demand Sunday, saying that she wanted Mrs. Khaleda Zia to step down immediately to allow President Abdur Rahman Biswas to dissolve the 330-member parliament

and call early elections.

Opposition leaders earlier rejected Mrs. Zia's offer to resign one month ahead of elections scheduled for 1996.

The latest move for a settlement stemmed from fears on both sides that one would try to blame the other if uncertainties over elections led to violence or provoked the armed forces to take over, political analysts said.

None of Bangladesh's past parliaments have served their full terms because of squabbling among politicians or their failure to ensure peace and stability, they said.

Pope calls Bosnian war Europe's shipwreck

VATICAN CITY (R) — Pope John Paul told diplomats Monday in his yearly "state-of-the-world" address that the failure to stop the war in Bosnia marked "the shipwreck of the whole of Europe."

The Pope told envoys from more than 150 countries that although some progress had been made towards peace in 1994 "there are still rising today from this world too many cries of despair and pain."

He said Russia's attempt to crush Chechnya's independence bid showed that negotiations were the only way to guarantee ethnic peace and called for national dialogue in Europe.

The CEC, which met here late Sunday, "has taken strong exception to such deliberate acts to weaken the organisation at this crucial juncture by a member of the leadership," Congress General Secretary Janardhan Poojary said.

Ajrun Singh, 64, asked Mr. Rao in a letter Saturday not to ignore party members who remained committed to the leadership of the late Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi" while picking candidates for the state elections.

In apparent references to Cuba and Iraq, the Pope said trade embargos imposed on countries often inflicted disproportionate and humiliating hardships on common people. Embargos should be used with great discernment and subjected to ethical criteria.

The 74-year-old Pontiff reserved the most heartfelt part of his speech to appeal for peace in Bosnia. Security concerns forced him to cancel a visit last year to its capital, Sarajevo.

"Very near to us, in the winter cold, the peoples of Bosnia-Herzegovina continue to suffer in their own flesh the consequences of a pitiless war," the Pope said in his French-language address in the Vatican's frescoed Reggia Hall.

Faced with this tragedy, which in a way seems like the shipwreck of the whole of Europe, neither ordinary citizens nor political leaders can remain indifferent or neutral," he said.

"There are aggressors and there are victims. International law and humanitarian law are being violated. All of us must react on the part of the community of nations."

The Pope, who has in the past suggested that international military intervention might become necessary to stop Serb aggression, said solutions to the war in Bosnia "cannot be improvised at the whim of conquests by either side" and law could never sanction "results obtained by force alone."

He said he hoped the latest ceasefire in Bosnia could lead to a "resumption of negotiations."

Although he called for dialogue to resolve ethnic differences, the Pope made no criticism of Bosnia in

India's ruling Congress Party hints at action against Rao rival

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India's ruling Congress (I) Party hinted Monday that it was planning to strike back at Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao's main rival for the first time since he quit the cabinet 16 days ago.

was "politically motivated." "His intention is clear," he said. "To say all these things at a time when the elections are due... is nothing but mischievous."

It was the strongest attack on Arjun Singh by the ruling party since he resigned from the cabinet on Dec. 24 after accusing Mr. Rao of plugging the 109-year-old Congress into a state of inertia.

Arjun Singh has since slowly escalated a carefully-worded anti-Rao campaign in a move seen as an attempt to project himself as an alternative leader of the Congress. He has gained support from several disgruntled party leaders.

Arjun Singh declined to comment on Mr. Poojary's statement. Asked if he feared he would be ousted from the party, he shot back: "That is not my concern."

Mr. Poojary's threat to hit back at Arjun Singh came a day after the party's unit in Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state, called for Mr. Rao's ouster as Congress president.

The move by Arjun Singh, who released the letter to the press, was widely seen as another attempt to cut Rao's support base in the Congress by indicating that the prime minister would not do justice to party loyalists.

Mr. Poojary told reporters here that Arjun Singh's letter

was "politically motivated."

"His intention is clear," he said. "To say all these things at a time when the elections are due... is nothing but mischievous."

It was the strongest attack on Arjun Singh by the ruling party since he quit the cabinet 16 days ago.

You have to choose between the Congress Party and Rao," Akbar Ahmad, a senior leader of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh, was quoted as telling the Lucknow gathering, which was attended by some 250 people.

The rebels urged Mrs. Gandhi to enter politics and "save the Congress" by abandoning her self-imposed isolation and jealousy guarded privacy.

The movement against Rao has been gathering momentum since the humiliating defeat of the 109-year-old Congress in state elections in November and December and a series of corruption scandals.

Three ministers were sacked last month in connection with a \$1.3-billion bank and securities fraud and a sugar scandal. Another quit in a huff.

Mr. Tiwari quit after Mr. Rao ignored his repeated demands to withdraw the party's support to a Socialist coalition government which rules the state.

U.K. labour launches new year attack

LONDON (R) — Britain's opposition Labour Party launched a tough new attack on Prime Minister John Major Monday and threatened to privatise the railways and to end mortgage help for homeowners who lose their jobs.

It would also force action on wage rises for managers at utility companies privatised by the Conservatives.

Last month Labour imposed a humiliating parliamentary defeat on Mr. Major's demoralised government, forcing it to scrap a planned doubling of tax on home heating bills.

Coming on top of a

U.K. satirist Peter Cook dies at 57

London (R) — Peter Cook, hailed as founding father of contemporary British satire and famed for his comedy partnership with actor Dudley Moore, died suddenly Monday of a gastrointestinal haemorrhage at the age of 57.

Cook, who rocketed to fame as a student wit and spearheaded Britain's cult boom in the "swinging sixties," influenced a whole generation of comedians but he capitalised on his early success.

He has attracted a following of fans for his wit and sharp wit, and he has been a fixture of British television for decades.

He was born in 1932 in a small town in the north of England and died in London on Jan. 12, 2002, at the age of 57. He is survived by his wife, actress Elizabeth Cook, and their two sons, Alexander and Christopher.

He was a regular on the BBC's "Last Night with Peter Cook" and was a frequent guest on "The Late Show with David Letterman."

He was also a regular on "The Late Late Show with Craig Ferguson."

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Tabloids vs quality press

THERE IS no denial that the tabloid press does exaggerate in its coverage of news and also in its views. This has led to complaints from both the country's political leadership and community leaders as well as from inside the ranks of journalists themselves.

Envisaged solutions for the "dangerous phenomenon," as the problem with tabloids is often called, range from calls to close those newspapers to contentions that the free market would take care of it, basically by enabling people to be the ultimate arbiters in judging what is good or bad for them.

Before delving into answers, though, some questions have to be asked. What is it that makes tabloids survive and prosper, not only in Jordan but also in other countries? Is it because they entertain? Or is it because they provide speculative answers, when information is either scarce or unavailable? Or, alternatively, because they tend to be radical in their views catering in the process for the fringe groups in society, or those who do not feed on the established media? Or is it because they venture into areas that are not normally trodden upon by the mainstream press? Finally, the question has to be asked whether politicians do not themselves resort to the tabloids, especially when they are denied access to quality newspapers, to either publish their views or their news.

It is not far fetched that the most two important factors contributing to the increasing popularity of the tabloids, which are read by about 10 per cent of all newspaper readers are, first, the paucity of news about what the government is or is not doing in Jordan, to safeguard the interests of citizens, which is an inherent weakness accompanying our understanding of the information field per se; and, second, the slowness in developing our mainstream press. Tabloid journalists, when criticised over their one-sided reporting or rumouring, often complain that they often fail in their attempts to verify stories from mainly official sources. And, as far as our experience shows, this is not totally untrue. We must all admit that there is a problem with the shallow, rigid reporting by the established dailies of stories which involve political events, corruption, crime, and other sensitive issues. This no doubt contributes to the popularity of the tabloids, which thrive on sensation and touching people's sensitivities. The press and publication law, with so many elastic and vague articles, also contributes to the problem, as we all know.

With this in mind, it becomes imperative for the new government of Sharif Zeid and for the media society as a whole to reexamine the legislation, the practices and even the news-making process in the country as a whole, as His Majesty the King indeed urged the prime minister in the letter of designation.

A good start would be to form a consultative body made of representatives of the press, the government and neutral observers who are otherwise called wise men. Such a body could review all the pertinent legislation as well as practices that impede progress of the profession and its product. One overriding factor must be realised at the outset, though. Openness and the free circulation of information of all aspects of societal activities is a prerequisite not only for constructive free speech but also for the healthy democracy that we all aspire to.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

GREAT HOPES are pinned on the new government of Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker at a time when the country is facing hardships and confronting new challenges in the peace era, said Al Ra'i daily Monday. The past two governments of Sharif Zeid did not cause disappointments to any one and handled critical issues with integrity and honesty, and for this reason Jordanian citizens are counting on the new team serving with the prime minister to listen to public complaints, deal with grievances and take drastic measures to put matters right, said the daily. Wishing the government success in its new mission, the paper said that the many ills troubling the country and the requirement of peace with Israel are bound to put Sharif Zeid and his colleagues to the real test. The paper said that the King's letter of designation to the prime minister contains the elements of success, if followed in the true sense and in word and in spirit.

SALEH QALLAB, a writer in Al Dastour accused Russian President Boris Yeltsin of trying to improve his shaky position at home by trying to annihilate the Chechen nation and destroying their capital! The writer said that the steadfastness of the Chechens before the Russian onslaught serves as a good example for the other oppressed nations of the world and their heroic resistance is a source of pride to all freedom fighters. The destruction of Chechnya can by no means help the Russian leader to annex the devastated nation to his empire and history abounds with examples that the annexation of nations by force of arms can never last, continued the writer.

The View from Fourth Circle

By Rami G. Khouri

The new government and the new millennium

THE DESIGNATION of Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker as the prime minister of Jordan, charged with translating into fact His Majesty King Hussein's vision of the need for national reorganisation to cope with the challenges ahead, is an opportunity for Jordan and Jordanians to experience very much more than a routine change of government. Let us be very clear about the stakes and the consequences of our current national development: In the next several years, perhaps decade, our policy decisions will determine whether Jordan will stagnate as another small, dependent Third World country that could not rip itself away from the comforting, child-like attraction of ancient patriarchal, imperial and dependent orders, or whether it advances as a model of balanced, human-based development that endures and flourishes because it values the dignity and rights of the individual.

Sharif Zeid appears destined to play a recurrently pivotal role in managing the modern political evolution of Jordan. He performed admirably when he led the government immediately after the April 1989 demonstrations in the south, bringing about an orderly transition to the early stages of liberalisation and democratisation. In retrospect, that was not an easy task, given the anger, fear and resentment that permeated a society in which almost every family suffered a declining living standard due to the accumulated debt and autocratic traditions of previous governments.

The situation today is different again. Jordan's current challenge is not mainly about domestic political culture — for what you see is what you get, an enlightened constitutional monarchy in which some light, modern principles of participatory, accountable and republican governance coexist comfortably with heavier, older patterns of tribal-based decision-making. The challenge for Jordan is to interact intelligently with the rest of the world, and more specifically with that small portion of the world's population that is moving ahead to forge a new global society based on twin access to information and services.

The world as a whole as well as individual countries — whether the United States or Jordan — are cleaving into two distinct groups: a small group of people and states that are dynamic, creative, exciting and therefore secure, and a much larger group of people and cultures that are mired in

mediocrity, stagnation and, ultimately, desperate poverty and conflict. The basic challenge is whether we will join the ranks of the Singapore and Switzerland of this world, or the Somalias and Bosnias.

Individuals have a major role to play in determining the answers to such questions, and I suspect that the manner in which Sharif Zeid shepherds the executive branch of government in the coming few years will set the tone for the direction of Jordanian national development for many years and decades to come. His most pressing task is to redefine the nature and power of the government, and to strike a new balance among the power of the state and the dynamism of the people.

This requires fundamental changes in the self-perception and behaviour of the state — not, you would think, a task suited for an individual whose entire life has been devoted to public service in the institutions of the state; yet, Sharif Zeid may be ideally suited to the task, as he showed post-April 1989. His background as a soldier probably gives him a vital capacity that other recent prime ministers have lacked — an appreciation for the limits of what armies and military security systems can and cannot do. His Sherifian lineage — the Arab equivalent of princely nobility — clearly provides him with the vital foundation of credibility, confidence and trust required to prod the country into long-term historical change.

The process of redefining and reorganising government is not a technical issue about projects and personalities. It is a far deeper conceptual struggle between two visions of the future: One vision sees the state as the source of all power, money and truth, and the other sees the individual and the people as the source of our strength and the vectors of our durability and development. The future that Jordan deserves would allow its people to express their full dynamism and creativity and thereby to meet their important challenges of economy, environment and diplomacy, in an atmosphere in which the individual, rather than the state, comprises the primary vortex of national development.

Sharif Zeid's government faces the monumental task of addressing this fact in a manner that is faithful to our social traditions and cultural values, but that simultaneously allows Jordan to move into the future alongside the modern, productive societies of our world. Information

and education are the two key areas where freedom, quality and vitality must be enhanced quickly and substantially, if we are to avoid a future in which we struggle to feed ourselves by selling ourselves to foreign tourists and investors, effectively turning ourselves into a combination zoo and parking lot for the world's powers — who became powers in the first place because they encouraged their people to be inquisitive, creative and bold.

The states that will flourish and grow strong in the future will be those states that can tap the full power of their people's intelligence and creativity. Modern Arab political culture and history have traditionally thwarted rather than promoted intelligence and creativity, while instead favouring compliance, obedience and passive allegiance as the preferred traits of their people. This era has brought the Arab World only greater tension and conflict, and, in most cases, including Jordan, heavy dependence on foreign funds and food.

Sharif Zeid faces the exciting but delicate task of translating King Hussein's vision of national reorganisation into a practical set of policies that moves Jordan from the past into the future, from old ways to new ones. The future is already clear for those who have the will to discern it; it is a future that promises progress, well-being and fun for those who dare to be free, exploratory, innovative and contemplative, and that promises suffering, war and want for those who are determined to suppress the energy of individual creativity and to beat down those who would ask questions.

In 1989, Sharif Zeid successfully helped Jordan to move from the first to the second halves of the 20th century. Now, he is asked to move us from the second towards the third millennium. The conceptual and qualitative leap required of Jordan is enormous, but within our grasp and capabilities, if we value freedom and human dignity above other, less noble forces of servitude, violence and exploitation that have tempted us in recent years. Sharif Zeid — with his combination of priestly and princely nobility and armed forces background — may appear to some as an unlikely candidate to lead the government through this historic stage of national transformation. I suspect he will rise to the challenge, though, because he has already done it once before during this millennium.

Testing to destruction

By John Hooper

FOR THE past eight months Italy has been governed by a businessman. Silvio Berlusconi's only previous experience of politics was as leader of a movement he founded three months before he became prime minister. Now that he has offered his resignation, serious consideration is being given to replacing him with a lawyer, Antonio Di Pietro, who has no political experience whatsoever.

In different ways both men owe their public notoriety, and therefore their political acceptability, to television: Mr. Berlusconi's three television channels control almost half of what Italians watch in their homes; as an anti-graft prosecutor Di Pietro became a national celebrity when he grilled the once-mighty in televised court proceedings.

What has made Mr. Berlusconi replaceable is the detection of a key coalition partner, the Northern League. The League is enthusiastically pro-capitalist, but otherwise impossible to fit into the conventional, left-to-right spectrum. Irene Pivetti, speaker of the Chamber of Deputies, is a member of the League. She is so far to the right that she wears the symbol of an 18th century French counter-revolutionary group on a chain round her neck. But then Roberto Maroni, the interior minister, is also a member of the League. And the jazz-loving "Bobo," when often turns up at ceremonial functions wearing shades and stable, is an admirer of his fellow sax-player, Bill Clinton.

With such a miscellaneous team behind him, the leader of the Northern League, Umberto Bossi, felt he could switch his party's allegiances from a rightist government to a leftist opposition. But when he did so, there was a rebellion in support of continued loyalty to the Mr. Berlusconi administration. And, inexplicably in any conventional terms, it was the "progressive" Mr. Maroni who put himself at the head of it. Clearly, much that is odd and new is happening in Italy. But what, exactly?

It has been suggested that the entire country has become a sort of political research laboratory for a world transformed by the fall of the Wall, and that the experiments being conducted in it offer the rest of us a fascinating, if disturbing, glimpse of the future: one in which politics will have little to do with ideology, and in which the crucial battle will be not so much for votes as for control of the means of communication.

That highly persuasive, and seemingly cohesive, view is nevertheless made up of several different positions, none of which necessarily implies any other. It may be true that



the Italians have unwittingly turned their country into a kind of political test bench in the years since 1986. But it does not mean that they have done so because of the end of the cold war. Nor, even if that were the case, does it mean that the results of their experiments need apply to anyone but themselves. By the same token, no one has ever proved an inherent link between television and ideological vacuousness, even though it may be commonplace to infer one.

Against this complex background, some simple questions would seem to be in order. What, for a start, is genuinely new? It did not need recent events in Italy to show that television can have a powerful influence on politics. But whereas TV has been used elsewhere to promote politicians, in contemporary Italy it is being used to create them.

Italian society would also appear to be throwing up new sorts of political leaders, with no previous experience of politics, and new kinds of political parties, that transcend the traditional left to right classification.

But which of these authentically original phenomena can be attributed to a new global order and which to specifically Italian circumstances? Which could have implications for the rest of the world and which only for Italy?

So far, the only politician to have been created by television has been Mr. Berlusconi, and he is unique. His control over the output of television would have been prevented in other countries by the application of anti-trust laws which, in Italy, proved to be defective and avoidable.

Nevertheless, as satellite channels rival terrestrial ones, national anti-trust will become increasingly irrelevant.

To the extent that they do, the risks of a future Mr. Berlusconi establishing ascendancy over a particular nation

increase.

The appeal to Italians of amateur political leaders may well have something to do with a global retreat from ideology. Just as plausibly, though, it can be seen as the result of a different, and uniquely Italian, phenomenon: the discrediting by scandal of an entire class of professional political leaders.

Huge gaps have been left in the Latin language, is called the the political space — that national territory which, in a democracy, is rightly inhabited by politicians. Something similar happened following decolonisation in Latin America in the 19th century and in much of the rest of the Third World in the 20th. In those areas, it was usually soldiers who leapt in to fill the gaps, claiming to offer a competence and honesty which indigenous politicians had been unable to supply.

Against this complex background, some simple questions would seem to be in order. What, for a start, is genuinely new? It did not need recent events in Italy to show that television can have a powerful influence on politics. But whereas TV has been used elsewhere to promote politicians, in contemporary Italy it is being used to create them.

Contemporary Italy seems to be providing the answer to the question of what happens when similar conditions arise in the sort of society in which a coup is unthinkable — the political space is invaded just the same, but by media moguls, and perhaps courtiers.

The emergence of parties in Italy which are difficult to classify on conventional criteria would at least to be one development that could safely be attributed to the disappearance of cold war tensions. Once again, though, there is a snub.

The outstanding example of such a group is the Northern League, and it was founded before and not after the fall of the Wall. It was created, moreover, in support of a specifically Italian protest — against the diversion of resources to a poor, corrupt and inefficient South.

The one party of significance to have emerged in

communism.

The paradox is more apparent than real. What kept the Italian Communist Party from office was not just the resistance to it offered by the Christian Democrats and their allies, but also the PCI's association with a repressive and inefficient Soviet Union.

Both these handicaps vanished in the years following 1989. The Soviet Union disintegrated. The Christian Democrats disappeared in a flurry of sleaze. Mr. Berlusconi entered politics to prevent the PCI, newly remodelled as the Democratic Party of the Left, from exploiting the opportunity which those two developments presented.

But while he succeeded at the hustings, he has failed in office, and the danger now is that the collapse of his bizarre experiment could deliver the initiative to his ally, Gianfranco Fini of the neo-fascist MSI. That could create an old-style left-right confrontation of an intensity unparalleled elsewhere in Europe.

If there are lessons to be drawn from events in Italy, therefore, they would seem to be substantially different from those outlined earlier.

One, with obvious implications for countries like France, Spain and Greece, is that if corruption is allowed to become systematic it can have devastatingly disorienting long-term consequences comparable with those provoked by military intervention. Another, with much wider relevance, is that control of television can be used, not as an opiate, but for unambiguously precise ideological ends. A third conclusion only applies to Italy, but is perhaps the most remarkable of all: that in Italy, of all places, the traditional conflict between left and right is still at the heart of politics, and

tin so far for some

Changing laws of gravity pull 'foreign affairs' east

By Thomas L. Friedman

TOKYO — A "foreign affairs" column now returns to The New York Times. "Foreign affairs" is actually the paper's oldest column. It was begun in 1937 by the remarkable Anne O'Hare McCormick and was originally called "In Europe." In those days "In Europe" was foreign affairs for sentimental Americans, and it seemed perfectly natural that the paper's one overseas columnist was rooted on the European Continent.

Mrs. McCormick's 1954 obituary in The Times said that she got her start in foreign reporting "as the wife of Mr. McCormick, a Dayton engineer whom she accompanied on frequent buying trips, not Paris."

Both factors have led me to start my column from Japan. While I have no intention of calling my column "In Asia," the thought did cross my mind. Let's face it, when the history of the late 20th century is written, the most important event may not be the reconstruction of Europe, the cold war or the collapse of communism, but rather the rapid modernisation in one generation of 2 billion people from Japan to the border of India. Never have so many raised their standard of living so far so fast.

I was in Singapore recently when its government decided that to keep attracting top-quality cabinet ministers, it would pay them about two-thirds of the average salary of the country's senior doctors, bankers and CEOs. That comes to \$765,000 a year for the prime minister and \$400,000 for the others.

No wonder an American diplomat in Hong Kong told me: "I go to eat crows on human rights, going to be able to keep the lid on a country that is economically becoming North Carolina and politically still North Korea?" And how long will Asians tolerate the fact that the economic boom has left them with five of the seven most polluted cities in the world?

The answer to all of the above is: not much longer, and that's why I chose to start here. Asia is not only the world's biggest business story in the coming years. The economic revolution here is well under way, and the political

the American ambassador in Tokyo is being restored by a Japanese construction company because there were no American contractors here skilled enough to do the delicate job. A new study by the Mansfield Centre found that there is still four times as much news about America on Japanese television as news of Japan on American television.

But if we Americans are still smug about Asians, always waiting for their bubble to burst, it is nothing compared with their smugness towards America. They think they can defy the laws of gravity — that economic consequences won't have political consequences. You cannot have a conversation in Asia without being verbally caned over how flawed America has become and how superior is the "Asian Way." Their smugness, though, is an misplaced as ours.

How long can Asian governments keep their people so regimented and focused on export growth when their middle classes are growing so wealthy? Take Singapore. Thanks to its stern government, it is clean, rich and seriously boring. Singapore is a shopping mall with passport controls. Any wonder American televangelists and Oprah Winfrey are increasingly popular out there?

How long can Japan's government keep telling its youth that they have to accept lower wages and live in apartments as big as my garage so that Japanese companies can put all their profits into expanding markets abroad? How long will Japanese consumers pay \$70 for a watermelon because Japan protects its highly inefficient food industry from foreign competition?

No wonder an American diplomat in Hong Kong told me: "I go to eat crows on human rights, going to be able to keep the lid on a country that is economically becoming North Carolina and politically still North Korea?" And how long will Asians tolerate the fact that the economic boom has left them with five of the seven most polluted cities in the world?

The answer to all of the above is: not much longer, and that's why I chose to start here. Asia is not only the world's biggest business story in the coming years. The economic revolution here is well under way, and the political

Features

Cabinet assured of vote

(Continued from page 1)

Haddadin (Zarka), who, along with deputies Mustafa Shneikat (Salt) and Khalid Haddadin (Amman), represented leftist lawmakers in a meeting with Sharif Zeid on Sunday.

He said the three deputies will vote against the government.

So will deputy Talal Obeidat (Bani Keneh), who told the Jordan Times he would withhold confidence from the government because it will implement the peace treaty with Israel.

With informed parliamentary sources expecting Deputy Toujan Faisal will most likely withhold confidence, the number of deputies who will certainly vote against the government is 22. Observers say opposition might also come from a few deputies who are unhappy with the government because they wanted to join it and were not given the chance to do so. Accordingly, the government is not likely to get more than 34-to-56 votes of confidence, the sources said.

Apart from the IAF, the four parliamentary blocs in the House are represented in the cabinet and so are independent lawmakers.

Perry flies over Golan

(Continued from page 1)

posed an "atomic threat," and urged Middle Eastern countries to press for the destruction of Israeli nuclear arsenals.

Later Monday, Mr. Perry said Washington would endeavour to control the supply of nuclear materials to Tehran after Moscow signed a deal to build a nuclear power station in Iran.

"We are working with Russia and former Soviet countries to help control nuclear and fissile material," Mr. Perry told a joint press conference with Mr. Rabin.

Both Israel and the United States were "very concerned" that Iran may develop nuclear capabilities, the defence secretary said.

"In my own judgement the time for Iran to get it depends on the assistance they can get.

"I believe that it will take Iran many, many years to achieve nuclear weapons but they have the possibility to acquire uranium and plutonium in the short range," he said.

Moscow agreed Sunday to help Iran build the first phase of a nuclear power station in the town of Bushehr and to provide enriched uranium to operate it.

Mr. Rabin told the press conference: "In the long term our main concern is Iran's

Founder of the 18-member National Action Front Abdul Hadi Al Majidi said Sharif Zeid responded to his group's request for occupying five of its members in the cabinet and he pledged the group will fully cooperate with the government.

The 10-member National Democratic Coalition has four representatives in the government and its spokesman, Hamzad Abu Jamous, said the group will fully support the prime minister.

So will the nine-member Jordanian National Front which has two members on Sharif Zeid's team, and the Parliament 'Ikha' (Brotherhood), which has five members of whom one joined the government.

House Speaker Sa'd Hayel Srour said Sharif Zeid recognises the role of the House and the need for developing strong legislative-executive relations.

On the basis of the House's experience with Sharif Zeid when he formed his second government and his assertion to Mr. Srour last week that he wants to fully cooperate with the House, the House speaker expected the new government to work in harmony with the legislature.

Peace needs strong support to hold

The following is the full text of a speech given by His Royal Highness Prince Talal Bin Mohammad at the annual conference of the United Jewish Appeal in Palm Beach, Florida on Jan. 7.

them with an umbrella.

As a result of Jordan's independent will, we would describe the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty as a natural evolution of our efforts. The drive towards the peace treaty began in 1988 when Jordan became engaged in a process of internal consolidation. That year, the Kingdom severed administrative and legal ties with the West Bank and Jordan was able to resume normal parliamentary life. Before that time, elections were impeded by the fact that half of the seats in Parliament were allotted to the West Bank.

Jordan proceeded to legalise political parties, maintaining a dialogue with the entire political spectrum of Jordanian society, thus compelling no-one to resort to extra-legal means in order to be heard. Jordan today has the freest and fairest parliamentary system in the Arab World.

This leads me to a brief summary of Jordan's objectives. Our goal is to provide a political model for the rest of the region: A model where institutions are not dependent on individual personalities; a model in which people will always come to accept any such settlement.

At the Madrid Peace Conference of 1991, Jordan was the only country that attended with the conviction that a political solution would not be forced on the belligerent parties by the two co-sponsors, the United States and Russia.

In addition, it was Jordan that made it possible for one of the key parties to the conflict, the Palestinians, to attend the peace conference by providing

The building of institu-



tions, however, would ultimately crumble without the crucial elements of economic and social stability brought by peace. In real terms, the peace treaty with Israel reassures Jordan's traditional role as a key player in the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict since the days of my late grandfather, King Abdullah. This position has often caused us great hardship, especially when other parties in the region were not yet ready to accept any such settlement.

Although Jordan's democratic process may be viewed as a threat by some of its neighbours, we consider it to be an irreversible process and we will not compromise the principles of freedom, the rule of law and popular participation in government for the sake of political expediency.

Against this somewhat gloomy background, it is all the more imperative

seven times that of Jordan's. Today, one in five Jordanians lives below the poverty line.

These discrepancies should be addressed as quickly as possible in order to maintain the confidence of every Jordanian in the peace treaty.

In Jordan today, expectations are running high but we are faced with a limited window of opportunity in order to act. The enemies of peace wish to see us fail and time is running in their favour. For this reason, we must focus on realism rather than idealism. Long-term projects, such as a Red Sea-Dead Sea canal are very exciting, but we need substance today.

By experiencing the tangible economic benefits of peace, our people will more readily be able to overcome the psychological and cultural barriers that have accumulated over half a century. Jordanians and Israeli children have the right to grow and live in peace.

If someone had told me a year ago that there would be an Israeli embassy in Amman today and that Israeli tourists were enjoying Petra for the first time, I might have thought they were taking too much Halcion.

But, thankfully, when desire, ability and genuine intentions come together, miracles do happen. And a miracle certainly did happen in the hot desert of Wadi Araba last October the 26th.

To quote His Majesty King Hussein speaking at the treaty signing ceremony at Wadi Araba:

"I wish this treaty to be the gift by which I express my gratitude to all Jordanians, young and old, men and women and to all the members of this cherished family to which I am proud to belong and will always be proud of as long as I live."



What kind of man do you take me for?

Two classic revivals are giving all the parts to men. Liberating, sexy or just confusing?

By Dominic Cavendish

DECLAN DONNELLAN, the artistic director of the famously fearless touring company Check By Jowl, is sitting in his sofa acting cagey about *As You Like It*. "It was very strange in rehearsal because they wore practice skirts and when they stopped to go off and have a coffee or light a fag it was as though there had been women in the room." He pauses. "The things we discovered are not the sort of things I can easily talk about in an interview, because they are emotional and instinctual — they change as soon as you talk about them."

But he repeated Palestinian assertions that no elections could take place without an Israeli redeployment. Palestinian Cooperation Minister Nabil Shaath voiced satisfaction with the establishment of a committee to handle the prisoner issue, consisting of Police Minister Moshe Shahal, Environment Minister Yossi Sarid and Justice Minister David Libai.

"I hope the decision (to free prisoners) will be taken quickly," Dr. Shaath told Monday's *Al Quds* newspaper.

in and went to the Palestinians' hotel for the first time since the election talks began in Cairo last year.

Dr. Erekat said this round of talks would last for two days.

"We are opening our discussions on elections and hopefully it will be a fruitful one," Gen. Zahar told reporters.

Asked what importance this round of talks would have in light of the meeting on Monday between Mr. Arafat and Mr. Peres in Gaza, Gen. Zahar replied:

"The importance is that there is ongoing discussions on all the issues all the time everywhere. We are going to discuss everything. We are not going to tell you the details of what we are going to discuss but it's open for all the issues that have to do with the elections."

Palestinian sources described the talks as low key and said they could not achieve anything without the redeployment of Israeli troops.

Palestinians have said they will not vote under the barrel of Israeli guns.

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said last month that the Palestinian elections

Pitched battles in Grozny

(Continued from page 1)

Kurbanov maintained Monday that Mr. Dudayev remained in the presidential palace.

Mr. Dudayev has not been seen in public for a week. For his supporters remaining in Grozny, life has been

A bridge about 100 metres behind the palace — the link to the only route out of the capital not yet controlled by the Russian forces — was also inaccessible Monday because of shelling and constant sniper fire.

Donnellan, on the current tour it has even been a bit with Russian mafiosi and Romanian schoolgirls. So, what, exactly, is he doing right? Neither he, nor his actors, seem quite able to put their finger on it.

In fact, Donnellan was so conscious of the dramatic gamble he was taking that he even had a mixed-cast alternative on stand-by in case things didn't work out. From day one, the guiding principle was to be deliberately uncomplicated. "We went in with one given — that we were going to have an all-male company as Shakespeare would have done and that we were going to avoid camp at all costs." To have largely steered clear of the subtle misogynies of camp in a play where the heroine, Rosalind, flees to a forest and, disguised as a man, pretends to be himself in order to test her lover Orlando, is no small achievement. Particularly when the actor playing Rosalind, in red dress and pearls, is the 6ft 2in tall Adrian Lester.

Lester explains that it was through playing Ganymede (the name Rosalind takes when she assumes a man's appearance) that he found femininity. "Initially, I was trying to be a woman and then the more I did it the more the audience noticed the gap. It was the moment I got into trousers and forgot about trying to be female that the audience started to believe I was." Surprisingly, these added layers of sexual identity (a man playing a woman playing a man playing a woman) are less problematic for actors and audiences than that of men just playing women.

Any actor who is asked to transform himself into a woman is either going to wonder why he has been chosen or worry that he'll end up as a grotesque caricature.

Both Lester and Simon Coates, who plays Celia, Rosalind's girlhood friend, were immediately troubled by their physical differences; Lester in particular was convinced he was too tall. Although they were trained in movement, they were told not to imitate, but to look for an inner femininity.

In rehearsals, started repressing traits he considered too testosterone-based. "The second I became in any way aggressive on stage, I thought 'Oh my God, I'm being masculine.' But De-

rian than there might normally be if we were playing men. We're always saying 'Would you do my dress up?' or 'Do I look all right?' — it's odd."

The pair still encounter actresses who take them to task for being inaccurate. But as Richard Eyre has observed about cross-dressing in general, however good the performances, you never forget you are watching men. Donnellan believes the all-male cast forces the audience to tread a tightrope of willed belief, a quintessential theatrical act of faith. "Exposing the nuts and bolts of theatre actually makes you more involved in the play. Instead of being a clever essay on gender confusion the device opened up the play's emotional heart."

Another forthcoming all-male production, Akimbo Theatre's version of Sheridan's 1775 comedy of manners, *The Rivals*, takes a very different tack. Subtitled "A Queer Appropriation", it opened a cult fringe status last October by turning the women characters into men and thrusting the drawing-room shenanigans into Nineies Soho.

The experiences of the actors, though, were surprisingly similar to their counterparts in Check By Jowl.

On stage, too, their behaviour has changed: "In our

self-obsessed Faulkland. "Those of us who were straight managed to work ex-girlfriends into discussions very early on. The first question people asked me after the show was always 'Who's gay and who's straight?'"

By contrast, within Check By Jowl, the sexuality of the actors was not an issue, though Coates and Lester are widely (and wrongly) assumed to be gay by audiences. "The men never look you in the eye if they come back-stage," says Coates.

The director of *The Rivals*, Robin Baker, uses the gay content to satirise the play's marriage-oriented power games — with mixed results. "My anxieties were that this was actually a woman in the text," explains Philip Gates, who plays capricious Lydia Languish. "The only way I found to bridge the gap was to rely on my emotions; i.e. why would I — not he, not she — why would I do that?"

What Gates hit on was that once you put a man in the place of the opposite sex, none of the characters' emotions can simply be labelled "male" or "female".

The actors have to latch on to character rather than gender (all men and women are merely players).

Scott Handy found it terrifying playing Orlando, the male lead in

As You Like It. "Playing

opposite a Rosalind bigger

than me made me feel insufficiently male. Then I realised the play is also about Orlando having to play a man."

In this, the production seems to strike a chord with the confusion surrounding that late-20th century phenomenon, the "new man", the man who can change the nappy with one hand, fix the drains with the other. One of the reasons why audiences may find the piece so gripping is that in a play that explores the language of love, Rosalind's speech runs rings around Orlando. But the difference between the articulate and inarticulate male seems to be only a dress away.

"It's odd that highlighting the gender leads you quite quickly to one of the most moving lines of the play, when Ganymede promises to set Rosalind before Orlando 'human as she is'." In the terrible world we have built, we are so conscious of our differences, and here is this line reminding you that what really matters is a human being.

He smiles. "For me, the issue of the actors' gender retreated until the first night, when they all walked on for the first time and I sat there in the audience thinking 'My God, what have we done? — we've got blokes in dresses'."

Economy

Arabs urged to create economic bloc

JBAI (R) — Arab League Secretary-General Essam Abdul Meguid called on Monday to create a 1-Arab economic bloc to meet international challenges such as pressure for a Middle East-wide market to include Israel.

Dr. Abdul Meguid was addressing a conference in Casablanca on the economic challenges facing the Arab world, organised by the is-based Euro-Arab Center for Studies with the participation of the European Union.

... We are a nation that the human and financial resources to set up an Arab trade zone to be called TA to form the first step and establishing an Arab economic bloc," he said. This bloc will also form a protective fence for Arab security and preserve the Arab identity in fact.

of what is called the Middle East market, of which there has been much talk recently as well as fears voiced of losing the Arab identity."

Dr. Abdul Meguid added: "The Middle East market idea, promoted by the U.S. and other Western powers as well as Israel, has so far been met with suspicion by many Arabs who see it as an attempt by the more developed Israeli economy to dominate their region.

"These fears should not scare us because we are an Arab Nation that has many capabilities and resources to deal with all suggestions with strength especially when we realise that what Israel aims to achieve depends on Arab acceptance. Israel cannot impose what it wants on the Arab World," he said.

A market that would integrate Israel into the economies of the mainly-Arab Mid-

dle East was widely discussed at a summit conference in the Moroccan city of Casablanca in October which was attended by Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and addressed by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

Dr. Abdul Meguid, a former Egyptian foreign minister, was one of the few to sound a note of caution at the Casablanca summit.

"In remarks critical of those Arabs who have already shown willingness to do business with Israel, he warned all political issues, especially those relating to the Arab-Israeli conflict, should be settled before thinking of economic cooperation ties.

The Arab World sits on close to 60 per cent of the world's oil reserves, but some of its countries suffer from poverty, political instability and chaotic economies.

Dr. Abdul Meguid's message was echoed by other speakers at the conference who said that Arab states should first integrate with each other before they talk about a Middle East market and that Israel should first withdraw from all Arab lands.

Sheikh Fahim Al Qassimi, secretary-general of the Arab Cooperation Council, called for a strong Arab economic bloc.

"The peace process has imposed political and economic challenges ... we have to be ready to deal with the challenges to reach the desired development," he said.

Sheikh Fahim was asked what the GCC states — Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Qatar and Bahrain — thought of the Middle East market idea. "It is premature to talk

about this at a time when Israel occupies parts of the Arab World, expands its settlements and owns weapons of mass destruction. The climate now is not appropriate for an economic normalisation with Israel," he said.

Several speakers spoke of the need to further boost economic relations between the Arab World and the European Union (EU).

Robert Houlihan, director of the Middle East Commission of the European Union, said that 60 to 70 per cent of Arab exports go to EU countries. He urged Arabs to set up an economic bloc which would strengthen their international trade relations.

"Trade relations exist between Arab and EU countries" on individual basis. What is missing is free trade between Arab countries themselves," he pointed out.

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Saudi riyal speculation down but questions remain

DUBAI (R) — Speculation against the Saudi riyal declined Monday but has not been eradicated as the world's financial markets assessed the seriousness of recent reforms.

Saudi Finance Minister Mohammad Abal Khail stated categorically in Monday's edition of the London-based newspaper *Al Hayat* that there would be no devaluation of the riyal: "It is out of the question."

Riyal-dollar swap rates — which rise when speculation of a devaluation builds as people question the strength of the Saudi economy — fell as soon as his remarks hit financial screens.

But the market was still unsettled, with dealers saying pressure against Saudi cur-

rency was strongest from banks or their corporate clients in London and New York.

On the plus sides, the Saudi government announced bold reforms on new year's day raising prices on heavily subsidised cuts including fuel and water — measures long called for by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), bankers and diplomats.

It said spending and the budget deficit would decline.

Dealers in Saudi Arabia also view statements like those by Sheikh Abal Khail as important, since he put his prestige on the line. Similar remarks cooled speculation in early 1994.

"The Saudis don't like to reward speculation," one said.

The pressure on the riyal surprised bankers and economists in the kingdom who saw the government's measures as positive overall and conducive to greater transparency and consequently greater credibility for government economic policies.

But on the negative side, economists and bankers pointed to the fact there is a deficit at all after the government gave the impression a year ago its 1994 budget would be balanced.

The 1995 budget spoke of a 40 billion riyal (\$10.7 billion) 1994 deficit falling to 15 billion riyals (\$4 billion) this year on spending of 150 billion riyals (\$40 billion).

Remarks by King Fahd Sunday night also called into question the durability of the

reforms.

The monarch, who had cut gasoline prices shortly after the Gulf war in an apparent bid to curry public favour, said the government hoped to return soon to reducing the price of everything from water to electricity to commodities.

"Once again, these (price) increases are temporary increases until matters return to balance and everything returns to normal," he said.

"I'm asking the citizen to help the state and this will be returned to him and matters will be returned to what they were. There is no escape from one of two things — that either we burden ourselves with loans which we cannot escape from paying, or we ask for God's help and for the patience of citizens for a short period — God willing — until the situation returns to normal," the king said.

Sheikh Abal Khail said that seeing the new measures as belt-tightening was an "exaggeration. I think 'nationalising spending' is a more appropriate term (which is) not to the extent of tightening belts."

The Cyprus-based Middle East Economic Survey (MEES) commented Monday: "The 1995 budget leaves no doubt that the Saudi financial authorities are prepared to take strong action to tackle their country's financial imbalances."

"Nevertheless, the budget is far from being a total solution to Saudi problems," it noted.

Kuwait's 93/94 budget overshoots targets

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwait spent \$2 billion more than its budgeted expenditure in the last fiscal year and earned \$204 million more than projected, the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) said Sunday.

It quoted a report from the Audit Bureau, which reports to parliament, as saying actual spending had overshot budget projections by \$1.4 billion (3.6 million dinars) in the 1993/94 fiscal year from initial projections of \$2.713 billion (\$9.0 billion). It did not say if the revenue figure was net or gross.

Oil provides Kuwait with more than 90 per cent of its national revenue. A 1976 law requires 10 per cent of revenue to be transferred to an investment fund designed to finance the emirate after its oil runs out over a century from now.

Oil income was less than expected but revenue from

state services and corporate taxes on foreign firms supported the 96 million dinars (\$204 million) fall in oil revenue, it said.

Revenue increased by \$1 million dinars in the 1993/94 fiscal year from initial projections of \$2.713 billion (\$9.0 billion). It did not say if the revenue figure was net or gross.

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the emirate's parliament had approved a projected net deficit of 1.223 billion dinars (\$4.4 billion) for the year.

The watchdog's report did not provide an authoritative deficit figure. Economists said the deficit increased by about \$50 million (\$1.839 billion).

The emirate is projecting a 1.502 billion dinars (\$5 billion) net budget deficit in 1994/95. The government says it plans to annual its budget gap by the year 2000.

Economists say such a step would require serious measures by the government affecting welfare benefits. Officials see a need to in-

duce taxes to the emirate's 1.7 million population but say that would not happen in the near future in order not to hamper the sluggish economy. There is no income tax but corporate tax is levied on non-Kuwaiti concerns.

The emirate provides its nationals with free education and health services and applies generous subsidies on essential services. Gasoline is cheaper than bottled water.

Gulf war-related expenses, including repairing damaged oilfields cost Kuwait tens of billions of dollars and more than halved its once large foreign investment empire.

Officials see a need to in-

Sri Lanka announces major privatisation package

COLOMBO (AFP) — Sri Lanka President Chandrika Kumaratunga has announced a sweeping privatisation programme to sell key state-run services, including aviation, transport and insurance.

In her first policy statement to parliament, Ms. Kumaratunga declared her new government will also end the state monopoly on power generation and hand over infrastructure development projects to the private sector.

"The government will embark upon a major programme of selective and carefully planned privatisation of public sector enterprises in 1994," Ms. Kumaratunga said in her 33-page policy statement to the 225-member assembly.

The money earned from the sale of state enterprises will be used to reduce the country's debt servicing burden, Ms. Kumaratunga said, adding that she hoped greater privatisation would lead to more foreign investment.

The opposition United National Party (UNP) legislators thumped tables as she announced the privatisation moves. The UNP's privatisation policy, known by the euphemism of "peoplisation," had earlier been criti-

cised by Ms. Kumaratunga.

"Where are your leftist policies," opposition back-benchers interrupted, referring to leftist partners in Ms. Kumaratunga's People's Alliance (PA) coalition, which was earlier seen as a left-leaning socialist party.

However, Ms. Kumaratunga went beyond the reforms introduced by the UNP and said the government would for the first time see foreign-funded BOO (build, own and operate) and BOT (build, operate and transfer) projects shortly.

"Privatisation will not only save and augment public resources for essential public investment, but will also enhance investment, employment and the quality of service in the privatised sectors and the economy as a whole," she said.

Ms. Kumaratunga said the government will end some of its industrial and trading activities in sugar, paper, fertiliser and milk and also enter into long-term management leases with private companies to manage its plantations.

The government planned to maintain a small stake in the privatised ventures to safeguard the interests of workers, she said. But she

asked trade unions to agree on a two-year moratorium on wages.

"Our government needs at least two years to set the economy in motion. We therefore request the employees to arrive at a tripartite agreement for a moratorium on wages for a period of two years," the president said.

"This would give the government the space to set effectively in motion our development programmes and thereby find solutions for our present economy problems," she said.

She also vowed there will be no increase in corporate and personal income taxes, currently at a high of 38 per cent, and announced that import tariffs will be gradually reduced to 15 per cent by 1998.

Local business leaders called for quick action following the announcement of a sweeping privatisation package and a promise of no new taxes.

However, despite the war in the island's northern and eastern regions, the economy in the rest of the country has grown at an average six per cent in recent years thanks to a free-market economy introduced by the previous regime.

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HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR TUESDAY, JANUARY 16, 1995

By Thomas S. Pearson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

GENERAL TENDENCIES: Two minor good aspects make you more enthused about the work you are required to do today and it is more than likely that you will get better results than expected. Mid-evening is the best time to spend with your mate.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Your creative thoughts may not be as practical as you think, so study them well before trying to put them in practice. Be sensible.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 18) Avoid a disagreement at home and get out into the world of activity. Try to accomplish something practical and be wise in doing so.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You have to complete some promises you have made early and then you can handle the business of the day wisely and very efficient.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) You may want something which is too expensive, so stay within your budget, and tonight enjoy your mate at home.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Keep silent even though you do not agree with what the boss is doing, otherwise you can get into trouble. Control your temper.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) This is a good day for planning to expand, but be sure you have the right perspective. Don't waste valuable time foolishly.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) One who is generous and an expert can point the way to greater profits for you in business. Be more open-minded to new ideas.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Don't interfere in a disagreement between an associate and an official, otherwise you can get into big trouble which is not wise.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Some new idea or plan can be very important to your advancement. Don't waste time with details over some new idea or project.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Although you want to have a good time, it is best to handle business affairs which can help you to make progress for the future.

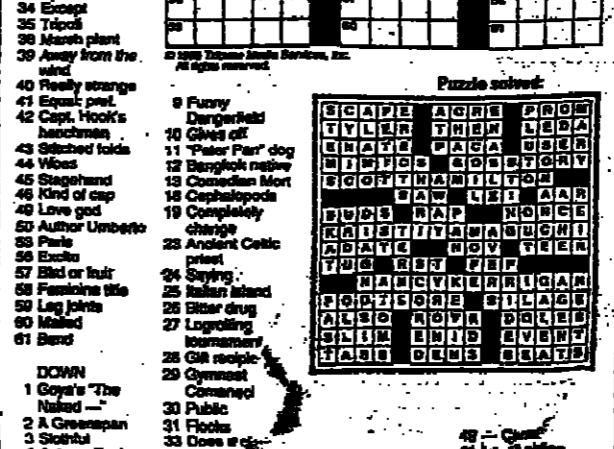
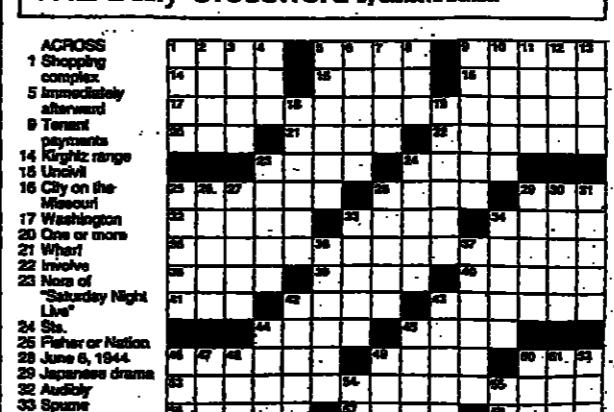
AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Discuss with a wise partner how best to gain public prestige in the days ahead and steer clear of a quarrel at home.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Plan your day so that you can handle vital tasks and have meetings which can give a wider scope to your activities you are involved in.

Birthstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz

THE Daily Crossword

by Janet R. Bender



Economy

Arabs urged to create economic bloc

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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia Commission économique et sociale pour l'Asie occidentale

UNRWA UHB(A) VACANCIES

The United Nations Relief & Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East requires at its Headquarters Branch (offices located in Bayader/Wadi Seer).

1. PURCHASING OFFICERS (6 posts: Grades 11-13)

(a) Monthly take-home pay ranging from about JD340 up plus Dependency allowance, plus Provident Fund from about JD.80 per month payable at end of service; as well as compulsory medical insurance.

(b) Incumbents will be responsible for the international procurement of supplies and equipment, coordinating with various UNRWA offices in English (main working language).

(c) Essential & highly desirable qualifications: University degree in Public or Business Administration; knowledge of international shipping regulations; packing systems and procurement technology; five years experience in a large purchasing activity; and working knowledge of computerised purchasing and material management systems. Fluency in English and Arabic is essential.

2. SENIOR SUPPLY OFFICER (BASIC COMMODITIES & INSURANCE)

(a) Grade 18: Monthly take-home pay starting about JD.680 plus Dependency allowance, plus Provident Fund of about JD.165 per month payable at end of service; as well as compulsory medical insurance.

(b) Is responsible for the procurement of all basic commodities required for UNRWA programmes; also is responsible for all insurance coverage and claims processing; controls stocks and logistics of basic commodities to meet Agency programme needs.

(c) Essential & highly desirable qualifications: University degree in Business Administration or related subject; training in supply management, international shipping marine, vehicle and property insurance, accounting and related EDP applications. 8 years' experience in the application of the academic knowledge acquired; demonstrated ability to operate PCs and standard Agency software in the context of supply operations. Very good knowledge of English & Arabic is essential.

3. SUPPLY OFFICERS (3 posts: Grades 13 & 15 in Basic Commodities & Insurance, and another in General Stores)

(a) Monthly take-home pay ranging from about JD.420 up, plus Dependency allowance, plus Provident Fund of about JD.100 per month payable at end of service; as well as compulsory medical insurance.

(b) Assisting the respective Senior Supply Officers with the procurement, shipping, storing and insuring of supplies and commodities required in Agency programmes; co-ordinations, exercising procurement progress control and monitoring cyclic purchasing activities.

(c) Essential & highly desirable qualifications: University degree in commerce, business administration or related discipline; six years' experience in application of this academic knowledge; demonstrated ability to operate PC and standard software for supply operations; good knowledge of shipping and commercial law and practice, including documentation, and port operations. Fluency in English and Arabic is essential.

4. ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER (Supply Division)

(a) Grade 14: Monthly take-home pay starting about JD.470 plus Dependency allowance, plus Provident Fund of about JD.110 per month payable at end of service; as well as compulsory medical insurance.

(b) Responsible for the administrative functions of the Supply Division such as budgeting, expenditure monitoring including the efficient use of communication services, assists with Supply personnel matters, maintains the register & locator cards of equipment at UHB (Amman), arranges for testing of commodities (quality control).

(c) Essential & highly desirable qualifications: University degree in Business Administration or related discipline; five years' experience in administrative post, of which at least two in supply-related work. Demonstrated ability to operate PC and standard supply software. Very good knowledge of English and Arabic is essential.

5. REALITY DATA BASE ADMINISTRATOR:

(a) Grade 14: Monthly take-home pay starting about JD.470 plus Dependency allowance, plus Provident Fund of about JD.110 per month payable at end of service; as well as compulsory medical insurance.

(b) Responsible for the maintenance of all support files in the data base (including e.g. catalogues, lists of suppliers) and technical information (such as global & security settings, user authorization tables); provides on-the-job PC training of supply staff and supports the users.

(c) Essential & highly desirable qualifications: University degree in computer science or a related subject. 5 years' experience in applying this academic knowledge, three years' experience on PC and Novell LAN at user level, including basic hardware operation; knowledge of data base management concepts; demonstrated ability to operate PCs and knowledge of standard supply software. Very good knowledge of English and Arabic is essential.

6. INSURANCE ASSISTANT (Basic Commodities)

(a) Grade 11: Monthly take-home pay starting about JD.340 plus Dependency allowance, plus Provident Fund of about JD.80 per month payable at end of service; as well as compulsory medical insurance.

(b) Assists with marine, vehicle, fire and other insurance required by the Agency; processes and follows up on claims from insurances; collects, verifies, processes data related to insurance matters including entry into and verification of PC records; monitors related shipping documentation; generally, performs all assisting functions for effective insurance coverage of Agency property of all kinds.

(c) Essential & highly desirable qualifications: University degree in Business Administration or related discipline; course work in insurance. At least five years experience in supply operations of which at least three years must have been insurance claims processing at responsible level; demonstrated ability to operate PCs and standard software and applications as used in the Agency. Very good knowledge of English and Arabic is essential.

Applications must be in English and accompanied by a duly completed United Nations Personal History Form (available from UNRWA or U.N. offices), must mention the post for which the application is made, and should be submitted by close of business (15:00 hrs) on Thursday, 26 January 1995 to:

The Coordinator
UNRWA Headquarters
P.O. Box 140157 (Wadi Seer)
Amman 11814 Jordan

UNRWA welcomes applications equally from men and women. Full consideration will be given to disabled candidates whose disability does not mitigate the effective performance of the duties of the job. Priority will be given to fully qualified Palestinians.



Minnesota Timberwolves guard #44 Winston Carland can't get a shot off with Orlando Magic's Shaquille O'Neal standing over him (AP photo)

Pistons no match for Magic, despite Shaquille's flu

AUBURN HILLS, Michigan (AP) — Overmatched and undermanned, the Detroit Pistons had nothing going for them except Shaquille O'Neal's flu. It wasn't enough.

O'Neal scored 10 of his 23 points during a 16-4 second-quarter run that blew the game open and Anfernee Hardaway added 26 points as the Orlando Magic cruised to a 108-88 win Sunday.

"That was the ugliest 23 points I've scored," O'Neal said. "I was really weak and tired. I'm hoping a day off will help. I really didn't get warm until the second quarter and even that didn't last that long."

Orlando has won nine of its last 10 games, including four straight, and has the best record in the league (26-6). The Pistons, who lost their eighth straight, were without rookie forward Grant Hill, who has an injured left foot.

The Pistons fell for the 13th time in their last 14 games and have a six-game home losing slide.

Detroit had already lost three key players — point guard Lindsey Hunter (broken ankle) and centers Mark West (arthroscopic knee surgery) and Oliver Miller (broken hand).

The Magic. "It's not easy to get up for

games like this," said Orlando coach Brian Hill. "But we're looking at it as a challenge, because we know everybody wants to knock us off now."

O'Neal was 7-of-11 from the line and 8-of-16 from the field in just 31 minutes.

"Shaq was very sick last night and this morning," Hill said. "He missed the shoot-around, so I didn't want to use him any more than I had to."

Hardaway was 8-of-13 from the floor and Horace Grant added 14 points and 14 rebounds.

"I was kind of scared about this game," said Hardaway. "You don't want to come in and lose to a team that's this beat up. We knew they would play very hard because they were so badly overmatched talent-wise."

Detroit was led by Joe Dumars' 19 points.

"We hung in there pretty tough a first, but they had more people and just wore us down," a disappointed Dumars said. "It's hard playing with nine. We don't have enough people to go out and compete."

In New York, Patrick Ewing and Hubert Davis each had 22 points to pace the Knicks to their season-high six straight win, 102-87 over the Minnesota Timberwolves.

John Starks added 21 points for New York, which extended its winning streak over Minnesota to eight games.

Isaiah Rider had 21 points and Greg Foster added 15 to lead the Timberwolves, who have dropped five straight.

Davis was 7-of-8 from the field, including a career-high 6-of-7 from 3-point range. The Knicks tied a team-record with 12 3-pointers (12-of-24).

In Denver, Reggie Williams hit a 3-pointer in overtime to give the Nuggets the lead for good in a 102-96 victory over the Milwaukee Bucks.

Williams, Robert Pack and Bryant Stith each scored 16 points for the Nuggets, who have won four straight against the Bucks.

Glenn Robinson had 21 points and Eric Murdock netted 20 for Milwaukee, which has dropped eight of its last 11 games.

The Nuggets sent the game into overtime with 8.1 seconds left on a layup by Brian Williams.

Denver had a chance to win the game with four-tenths of a second left, but Stith missed two free throws after Marty Conlon was called for a deliberate foul.

The Nuggets still had one more chance to win it after retaining possession on the deliberate foul, but a dunk by Brian Williams came just after time expired.

At Los Angeles, Vlade Divac had 21 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists for his third career triple-double as the surging Lakers won their fifth straight, 122-105 over the Miami Heat.

Anthony Peeler contributed a season-high 23 points off the bench and rookie Eddie Jones scored 20 as the Lakers, who won for the 10th time in 12 games, played their second straight contest without leading scorer Cedric Ceballos. Ceballos missed Friday's game against Milwaukee with back spasms.

Six Lakers scored in double figures, including George Lynch, starting in place of Ceballos, who had 18, Nick Van Exel (17) and Elden Campbell (13).

Glenn Rice had 26 points and John Salley added 19 as Miami lost for the fourth time in five games and lowered its road record to a league-worst 2-14.

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Peeler, running hard at the defence, added the killer blow in the dying seconds when he shot into the back of the net from close range.

Saeed Owairam created the best chances for the Saudis, but wayward finishing foiled his efforts.

Meanwhile trim-looking Gabriel Batistuta opened Argentina's Cup-challenge by giving Japan a footballing short-back-and-sides during a convincing 5-1 win here on Sunday.

Batistuta, ordered to have a haircut by new coach Daniel Passarella or face the axe, scored twice as the Latin American champions extended their unbeaten record since the World Cup.

For Japan, the Group B defeat meant the end of their cup ambitions after losing their opening match 3-0 to African champions Nigeria, who now meet Argentina in Mexico Friday.

With their second defeat Sunday they are out of contention for the title and Denmark play Mexico Tuesday to decide which team goes through to meet the winner of Group-B in the final.

Five minutes after hitting the bar from a 25-yard free kick, Laudrup pierced the defence with a 44th minute burst and slipped the ball between the keeper and the near post.

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SOCCER
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The indomitable Lions scored only one goal in three matches and faced a difficult game in Zimbabwe this month.

Zaire achieved their first victory in the tournament, defeating Lesotho in Kinshasa after a Roger Lukaku scored a second-minute penalty.

Mali retained top spot in Group A by winning 3-1 against Senegal, while Gabon struggled off two consecutive defeats to move into Nambia 5th in Group C, where all the goals came after half-time.

The clash of Portugal's best teams in Luanda ended 1-1, with Angola emerging 1st in Group D, followed by Mozambique, the 10th minute.

Portuguese group 1 passed their tests, while Sierra Leone managed one win against Mauritania but moved one point clear of Libya, who were held by Guinea-Bissau.

Senegal and Tunisia, seeded countries, continued to occupy the lowest positions, after another goalless draw, this time in Ziguinchor.

Group 3 leaders Ghana

were another team up to scratch, and Sierra Leone moved within two points of the four-time champions.

Scoring twice within

minutes to overcome

Group 4

Group 5 leaders

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Al Wihdat's team

Wihdat, Hussein clash today

By Aileen Bannayan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The 19th week of the first division soccer championship may prove to be the turning point for this year's competition which will go down in Jordan's sports archives as one of the most competitive seasons.

With only three more weeks to go, the top team is still unknown. Three teams — Al Wihdat, Al Ramtha and Al Hussein — are serious contenders, while Al Faisali's chances are slim. However, Al Wihdat's match with Al Hussein Tuesday may finally narrow down the speculations.

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At the other end of the standings, Al Arabi's match with Kufraoum will probably have a major bearing in deciding the fourth team to be relegated.

Eight-place Al Arabi need a win to nearly secure their place in the division and leave 9th placed Al Qadissieh, a fourth placed finisher last season, almost certain to drop!

Jordan Soccer League

Al Arabi have tough matches ahead against Al Wihdat, Al Hussein and Al Ahli.

Newcomers Shabab Al Hussein, Al Karmel and Al Jeel have already been relegated and only the other

newcomer, Kufraoum, has defected expectations and managed to upset top teams and maintain a half-way standing. Their most memorable results are their 2-1 win over Al Hussein and a 0-0 draw with Al Wihdat.

In the battle for the competition's top scorer title four players are now tied with 13 goals: Aref Hussein (Al Hussein), Mouaffaq

Abu Hdeib (Al Ramtha), Yousef Obeidat (Kufraoum). Al Faisali's Jiryes Tadros is second with 11 goals followed by Al Arabi's Ayman Al Oman and Al Ahli's Nart Yada with 10 goals.

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Algerian parties to present plans to resolve crisis

ROME (Agencies) — Algerian political figures meeting here said Monday that they planned to submit proposals to the Algerian people in view of resolving the political crisis and fundamentalist violence wracking their country.

Abdul Nour Ali Yahia, a spokesman for the delegates and president of the Algerian Human Rights League, said the meeting was taking place in Rome under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Sant'Egidio community because "conditions for a real dialogue that would guarantee the participation of all parties, without exclusion, do not actually exist in Algeria."

The legal and illegal opposition parties taking part in the talks include the outlawed Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) represented by Anwar Haddam, a FIS leader exiled in the United States.

Former Algerian President Ahmad Ben Bella was also in Italy, presumably to attend the talks which began Sunday.

Several other political figures were expected to arrive here this week. Mr. Ali Yahia said he still had hope that the FIS representative in Europe, Rabah Kébit, based in Germany, would be allowed to travel to Italy.

He added that the FIS was seriously interested in ending the campaign of bloodshed that gripped the country after the military intervened in January 1992 to cancel the second round of general elections. The FIS was poised to win.

"We are working with the view of making proposals to the Algerian people," Mr. Ali Yahia said.

The Algerian government has denounced the meeting as a means of meddling in the country's internal affairs and refused to send a representative.

But Mario Marazziti, spokesman for the Sant'Egidio community which served as mediator in the talks that ended Mozambique's civil war in October 1992, said the aim was not to interfere in Algerian affairs but rather to help resolve the political crisis.

Another Algerian opposition leader said on Monday that violence in his country could no longer be contained and urged negotiations with the army-backed government.

"We should end this disastrous spectacle for which, though in different ways, both the government and Muslim extremists are responsible," said Hocine Ait

Ahmad, secretary of the Socialist Forces Front (FFS).

"The hijacking of the Air France plane confirmed that violence cannot be contained within Algeria," Mr. Ait Ahmad told Italian radio.

"The talks should produce a concrete, democratic and peaceful plan to begin negotiations with the government," he said. He also urged parliamentary elections.

Sant'Egidio hosted a first-round of talks among Algerian opposition leaders in November.

The community said on Saturday that fresh meetings were needed after an escalation in violence, including the hijacking of an Air France Airbus on Dec. 24 and the killings of four Roman Catholic priests three days later.

Western intelligence sources estimate that up to 30,000 Algerians have been killed in civil strife since the army cancelled the 1992 general election.

Nearly 70 foreigners have been killed by guerrillas since late 1993.

Algerian President Liamine Zeroual tried late last year to resolve the crisis through dialogue with Muslim fundamentalist leaders but his attempt failed.

Meanwhile, trial dates have been set for a senior FIS official and for one of the sons of the fundamentalist movement's leader Abassi Madani, Algerian judicial officials said.

Abdul Kader Hachani, head of the FIS provisional executive bureau, is to appear before the Algerian special court on Jan. 28 charged with publishing false information harmful to national interests and unity.

Mr. Hachani was arrested in January 1992 after signing a statement calling on soldiers to take part in a disobedience campaign. He has staged a number of hunger strikes to protest his detention since then without trial.

Mr. Hachani's son Okba is to appear before the same court two days later charged with setting up "armed terrorist" groups. He was arrested in August 1993 in a hotel in Oran in western Algeria.

His brothers Iksal, Osama and Selimane have been sentenced to death in their absence by the Algiers court in connection with the bombing of the capital's international airport in May of that year.

Their father is under house arrest.

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CONGRATULATIONS: Prime Minister Abdurrahman Majali and Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, along with other members of his cabinet, receive congratulations.



NEWS IN BRIEF

Mortar kills pro-Israeli militiaman

TEL AVIV (AFP) — A member of a pro-Israeli militia died and a Jewish soldier was lightly wounded during fighting with Islamic fundamentalist guerrillas in southern Lebanon on Monday, military officials said. Shelling killed the militiaman from the South Lebanon Army while the Israeli was hurt in an attack on the edge of the "security zone" Israel occupies in Lebanon. In Tyre, Lebanese police said the Hezbollah group fired 18 shells and 10 anti-tank rockets at an Israeli position near Rosh Haayin, at the northern limit of the zone. Israeli artillery opened up in response lobbing some 40 shells on two villages under the sway of Hezbollah. Hezbollah issued a statement claiming it had inflicted heavy casualties when its guerrillas set off several bombs as an Israeli armoured patrol just one kilometre from the Lebanon-Israel border. "The 20-members of the patrol were killed and wounded in an exchange of fire which followed the explosions," the statement said. Hezbollah said the patrol included two personnel carriers, a tank and a mine-sweeping vehicle.

Arafat laments lack of Palestinian 'Rothschild'

CAIRO (AFP) — Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat said Sunday the self-rule authority needed a rich Palestinian benefactor to help develop the autonomous areas just as Zionism prospered from the aid of Baron Edmond de Rothschild before Israel came into being in 1948. "There are dozens of Palestinians as capable as Rothschild, but so far no Palestinian Rothschild has emerged," Mr. Arafat told the Saudi daily Al Sharq Al Awsat, published here Sunday. "Rich Palestinians have started coming forward" to help rebuild Gaza and Jericho, Mr. Arafat said, "but I expect more from them — they must join in the construction of the country of their children and grandchildren. He said the Palestinian Authority was holding talks with Palestinian businessmen. Mr. Arafat also lamented the failure of international donors to fulfil aid pledges to the Palestinians.

In earlier written evidence to the court, the prosecutor said Mr. Kassar's sympathy with Arab states in their conflict with Israel "led him to take an attitude of positive collaboration with the Palestine Liberation Front."

He alleged Mr. Kassar travelled in the summer of 1985 from Marbella to Warsaw, where he had an arms store, collected four Kalashnikov AK-47 rifles and eight grenades and delivered them to Abu Abbas in Tunis.

Mr. Kassar was arrested in June 1992 on the orders of investigating Judge Baltazar Garzon on suspicion of links with "international terrorism," illegal possession of arms, trading in stolen cars and forging documents.

He was remanded in custody, his bank accounts were blocked and his property, including several Costa del Sol villas, was confiscated.

A year later he was granted bail while investigation of his alleged links with the Achille Lauro affair continued.

The trial is expected to last at least two weeks.

Egyptian police kill 3 suspected militants

ASSUIT (Agencies) — Egyptian police shot dead three youths thought to be Muslim militants in an exchange of fire in southern Egypt on Monday, security sources said.

The youths, aged 17, 20 and 22, had been hiding in an abandoned building in the middle of fields near Saw village in Assuit province about 280 kilometres south of Cairo.

Police believe they were members of the military wing of the militant Gamaa Al Islamiyah (Islamic Group), the largest organisation fighting the security forces, the sources said.

A police unit came across them while searching the fields and an exchange of fire broke out. In the building police found two automatic weapons, a revolver, a forged passport and money including U.S. dollars, they added.

The youths said police thought the youths had recruited new members for the Gamaa and had handled contacts between Gamaa units in Assuit and those in other provinces along the Nile Valley as far north as Cairo.

In a shootout on the outskirts of Cairo on Sunday, police shot dead five suspected Muslim militants. It was the first operation against militants in the capital this year.

Later on Sunday gunmen shot dead a sugar factory worker in the south and security sources said they suspected militants attacked him in the belief he was collaborating with the police.

One woman passerby was injured in the attack, which took place in the village of Eastay in Minya province, about 240 kilometres south of Cairo, they said.

The latest deaths bring the death toll from political violence in Egypt to about 700 since the Gamaa began a campaign to overthrow the government in 1992.

On Sunday, police arrested 18 suspected Islamic militants in Cairo, acting on information from militants on trial for the attempted murder of the author Naguib Mahfouz.

Police officials said 17 of the suspects were arrested in raids in the Medinat Nasr, Al Shams and Maatariyah districts of Cairo.

Another suspect, Mobaarak Rifai, was arrested in the south of the city as he distributed leaflets denouncing the detention of an Islamic Journalist, Adel Hussain.

At issue is the transfer of power from Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani, whose two-year term expired Dec. 28, and the establish-

France dismisses criticism against ties with Baghdad

PARIS (Agencies) — France on Monday rejected American and British criticism of its decision to open an interests section in Baghdad nearly four years after the Gulf war, saying both already had low-level links with Iraq.

We have been very surprised by the British and American comments at the announcement of the opening of a French interests section in Baghdad," French foreign ministry spokesman Richard Duque told reporters.

Washington and London expressed concern that Paris' decision last week might encourage Iraq to flout peace terms imposed after the 1991 Gulf war ejected Iraqi troops from Kuwait.

"An Iraqi interests section has been opened in London since 1991 while the Iraqi interests section opened in Paris only in September 1993," Mr. Duque said.

The American reaction is even more astonishing as the United States itself has, in Baghdad since 1991, a set-up operating in the buildings of the U.S. embassy under the Polish flag," he said.

The French interests section will be different only by the presence of a French diplomat with a very small staff," he said.

Last Friday Paris received a senior Iraqi leader, Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz, for the first time since the war and said it was opening the interests section in the Romanian embassy in Baghdad.

The U.S. State Department attacked the decision. "Now is not the time to make gestures towards Iraq," said spokeswoman Christine Shelly.

"We don't consider it helpful or constructive," she said.

In London, the Foreign Office said: "This is not the moment to relax the pressure on Iraq to comply fully with U.N. requirements," adding: "There has been no prior European Union coordination on re-opening relations with Baghdad."

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COLUMN

U.S. freshmen: apolitical, smoke more, drink less

WASHINGTON (AFP) — First-year college students are less interested in politics than their peers in the past, are smoking more cigarettes and marijuana but drinking less, according to a survey released Sunday. The percentage of incoming freshmen who said that "keeping up with political affairs" was an important goal dropped to 31.9 per cent this year, the lowest percentage since the survey was started 29 years ago.

A declining percentage of incoming freshmen declared, on the contrary, that this initiative could help to sort out certain points. Mr. Duque added, without elaborating.

Iraq was long a prime client for French arms and capital goods and owes Paris about \$5 billion. Baghdad is unable to earn hard currency to service its debt due to the U.N. embargo on its oil production.

In addition, French oil companies Total and ELF-Aquitaine have been negotiating deals with Iraq to help renew its oil industry once the oil production embargo is eased.

"Iraq contacts Israel." Morocco has informed Israel that Iraq is prepared to "recognise" the Jewish state, a newspaper reported Monday.

King Hassan had forwarded a message from an Iraqi general who is in charge of Baghdad's negotiations with the United Nations, Israel's Haaretz daily said. He had given the message to a Moroccan minister who recently visited Baghdad, the daily added.

According to Israel's military radio station, the message was transmitted through a liaison bureau which Israel opened in Rabat last year.

Government sources said several similar reports from Baghdad had reached Israel in recent weeks via other channels.

Israel and Iraq have both repeatedly denied reports of secret contacts between the two countries.

Iraqi President Saddam Hussein last week urged Arab states to resume the missile attacks he launched on Israel during the 1991 Gulf war.

MEMPHIS, Tennessee (R) — "It's an Elvis thing," said Dawn Smyth as she knelt and placed a birthday card, a teddy bear and a rose at the grave site of Elvis Presley, the king of rock 'n' roll.

Smyth, who came from Chicago to acknowledge Presley's 60th birthday Sunday, said she is typical of Elvis fans who agree there is a special aura about the king's home. Her act of devotion was only one of many during a mass celebration at Graceland mansion, Presley's table home, honouring the late singer's 60th birthday.

With a cake fit for a king awaiting them, nearly 5,000 fans descended on Memphis Friday for a three-day event. They sang happy birthday to their idol, ate from 17 sheet cakes, listened to Elvis music and snapped photos.

U.S. high school principal heads for court

MONTGOMERY, Alabama (R) — A federal judge this week will be asked to decide the fate of a former Alabama high school principal who tried to ban interracial dating and allegedly called a mixed-race student "a mistake."

The principal, Hulond Humphries, thrust Randolph County High School and the tiny eastern Alabama hamlet of Wedowee into the national spotlight last February by threatening to cancel the annual high school dance if interracial couples planned to attend. The controversy forced the school board into a \$25,000 out-of-court settlement in June with former junior class president Revonda Bowen, who has a white father and a black mother and who maintains that Mr. Humphries called her "a mistake" during school assembly.

Mr. Humphries has emphatically denied the accusation. Racial tensions in Wedowee reached a new peak last August when a man destroyed the high school building and the national media flocked to the town to cover a federal investigation of the blaze. The Randolph County school board, which resigned Mr. Humphries to an administrative job after a black television cameraman accused the principal of roughing him up, has since agreed with the U.S. Justice Department to bring school policies in line with outstanding court orders against racial segregation.

However, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and a group of Randolph County parents, in motion against the school board that has been joined by the Justice Department, are expected to ask U.S. district Judge Myron Thompson to fire Mr